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January 2023

ULTIMATE WORLD CUP REVIEW

- EVERY GOAL
- EVERY GAME
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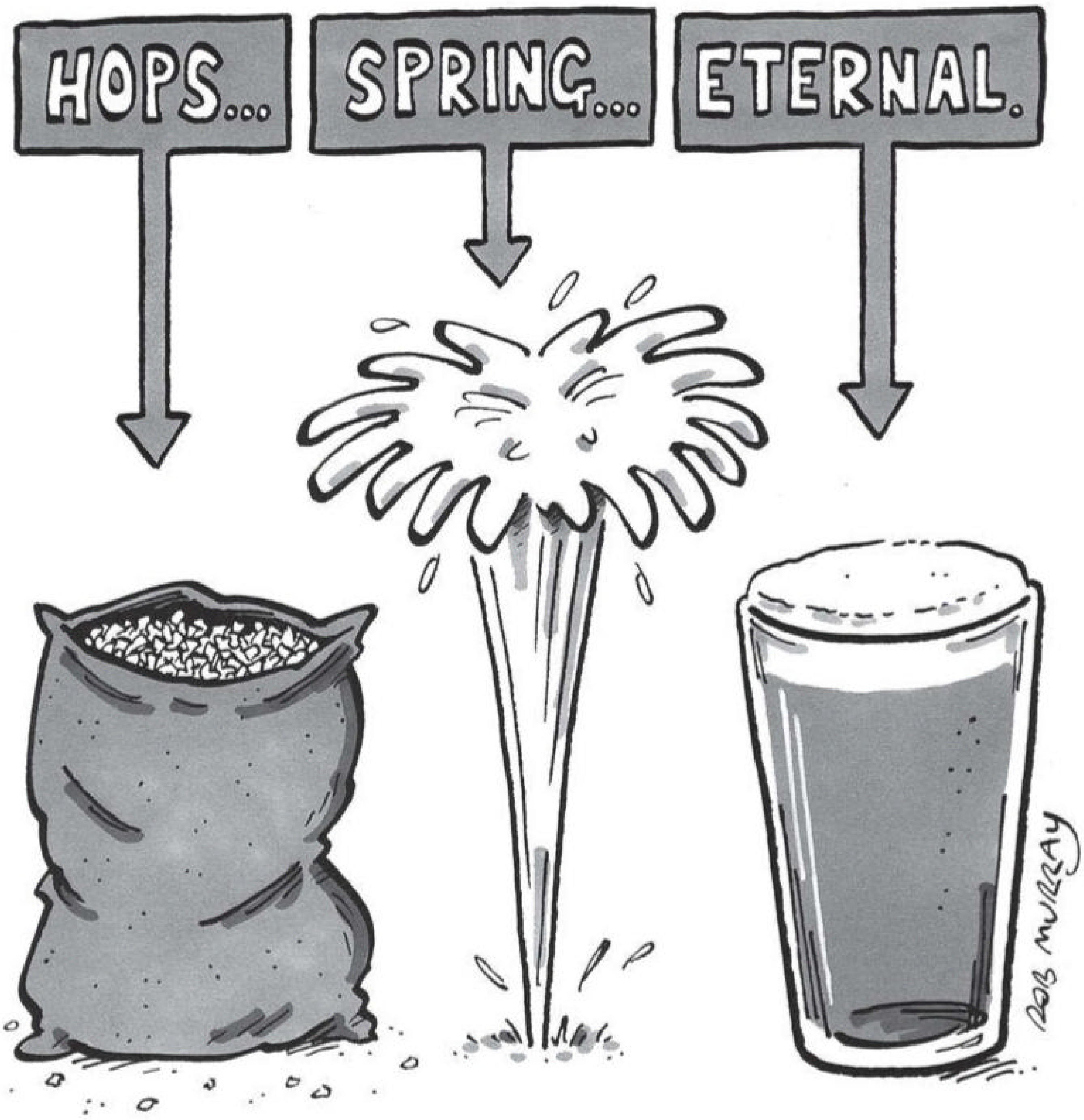
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When a Yorkshireman finds a source of pure spring water, he doesn't bottle it. He builds a brewery on it.

In 1863 Timothy Taylor was given the opportunity to buy land over a natural aquifer spring. He immediately did what any good Yorkshireman would, and set to work building a brewery. Ever since, The Knowle Spring has been the source of the unique Pennine spring water we use to brew our beers. It has filtered slowly through layers of black rock and limestone and is said to have a taste like melted snow. Very pure and consistent water means we're able to brew beer with a finely balanced flavour and reliably high quality. After that first sip you might agree.

TIMOTHY TAYLOR'S 1858 CHAMPIONSHIP BEERS LANDLORD THE CLASSIC PALE ALE ABV 4.3%

All for that taste of Taylor's

WorldSoccer

January 2023

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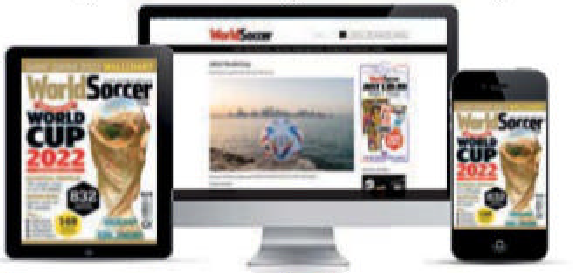

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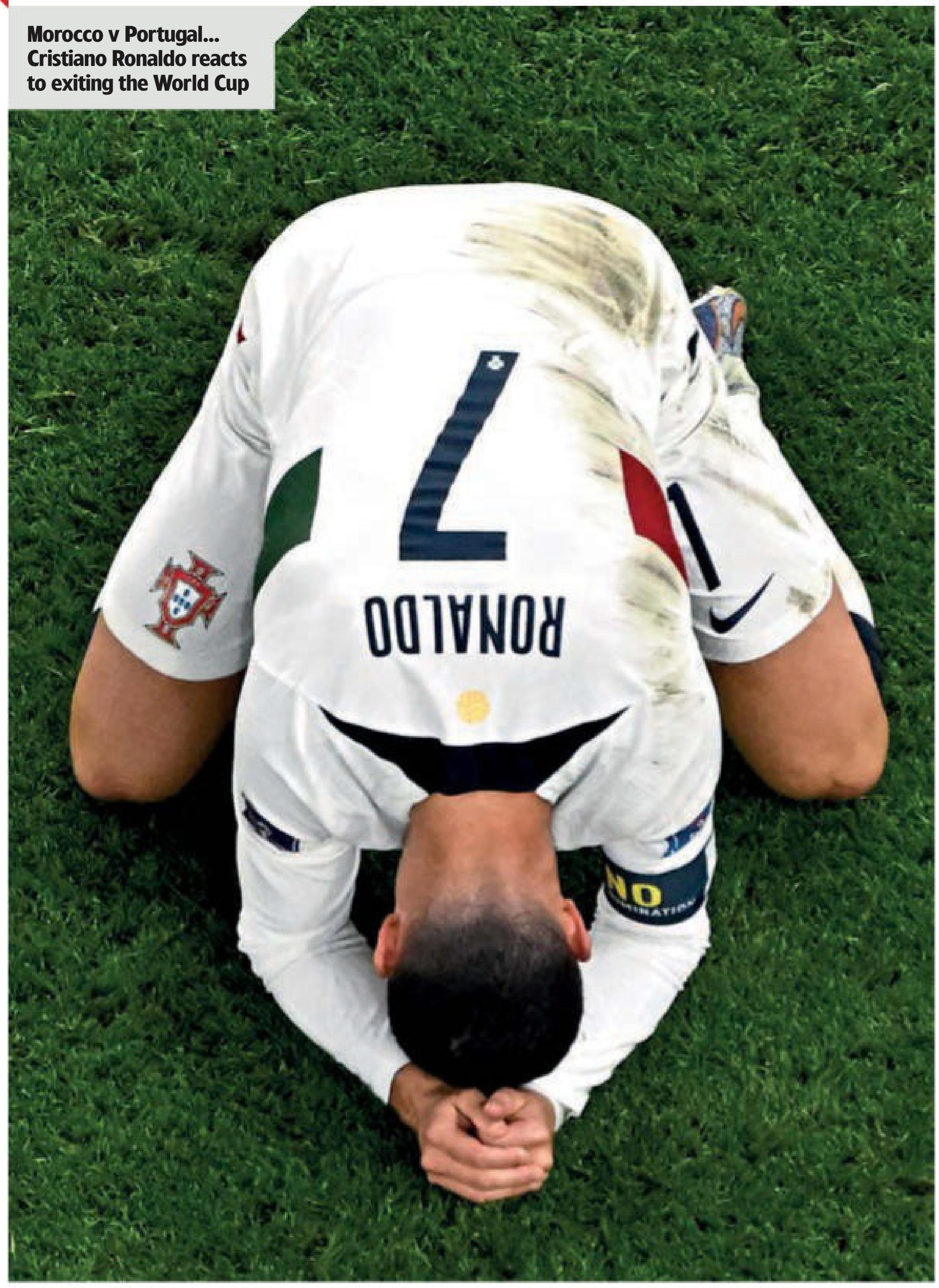
In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

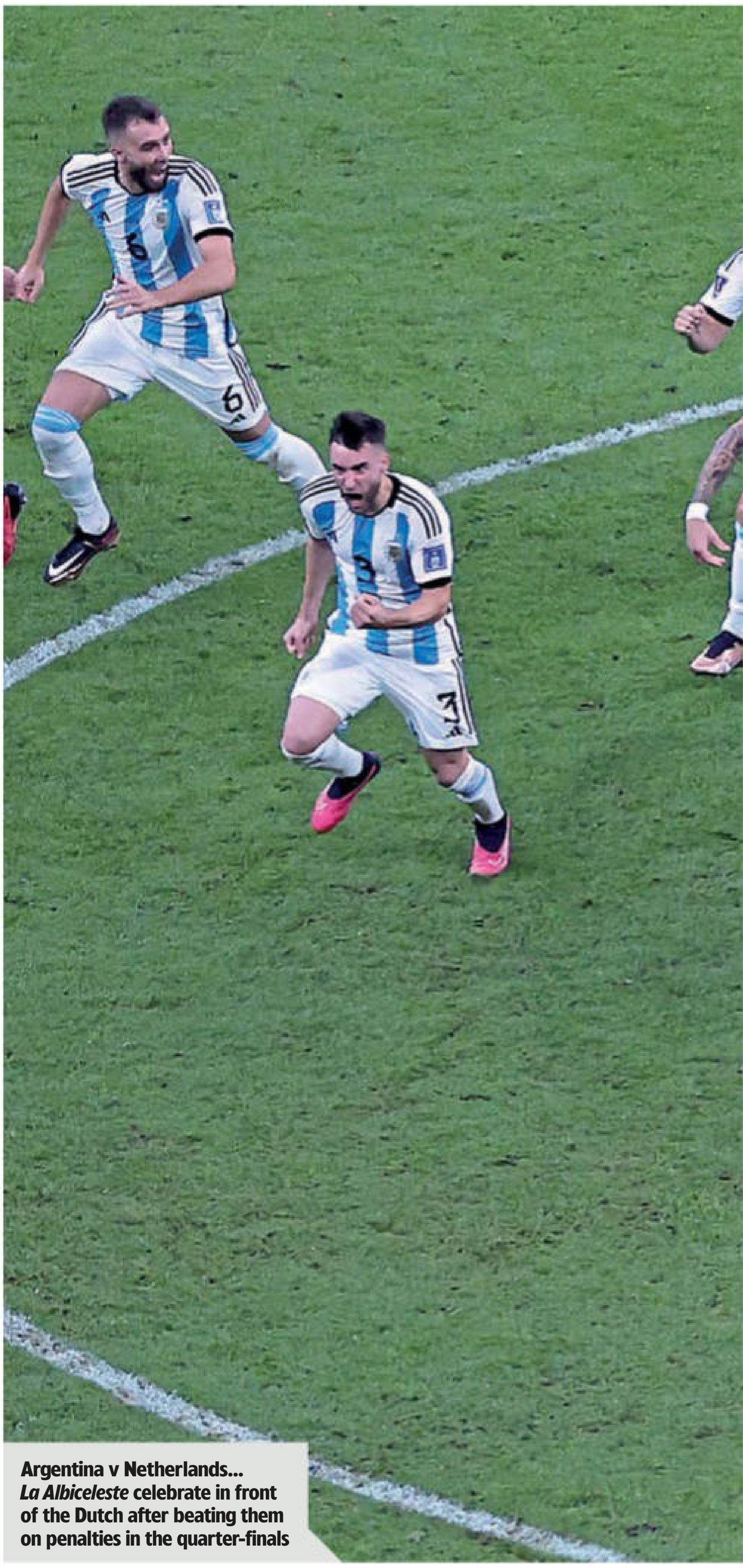
Argentina v France...Lionel Messi is held aloft among fans, staff and team-mates after winning the World Cup final



Morocco v Portugal... Cristiano Ronaldo reacts to exiting the World Cup

Morocco v Portugal... Atlas Lions coach Walid Regragui celebrates with his players after reaching the World Cup semi-finals

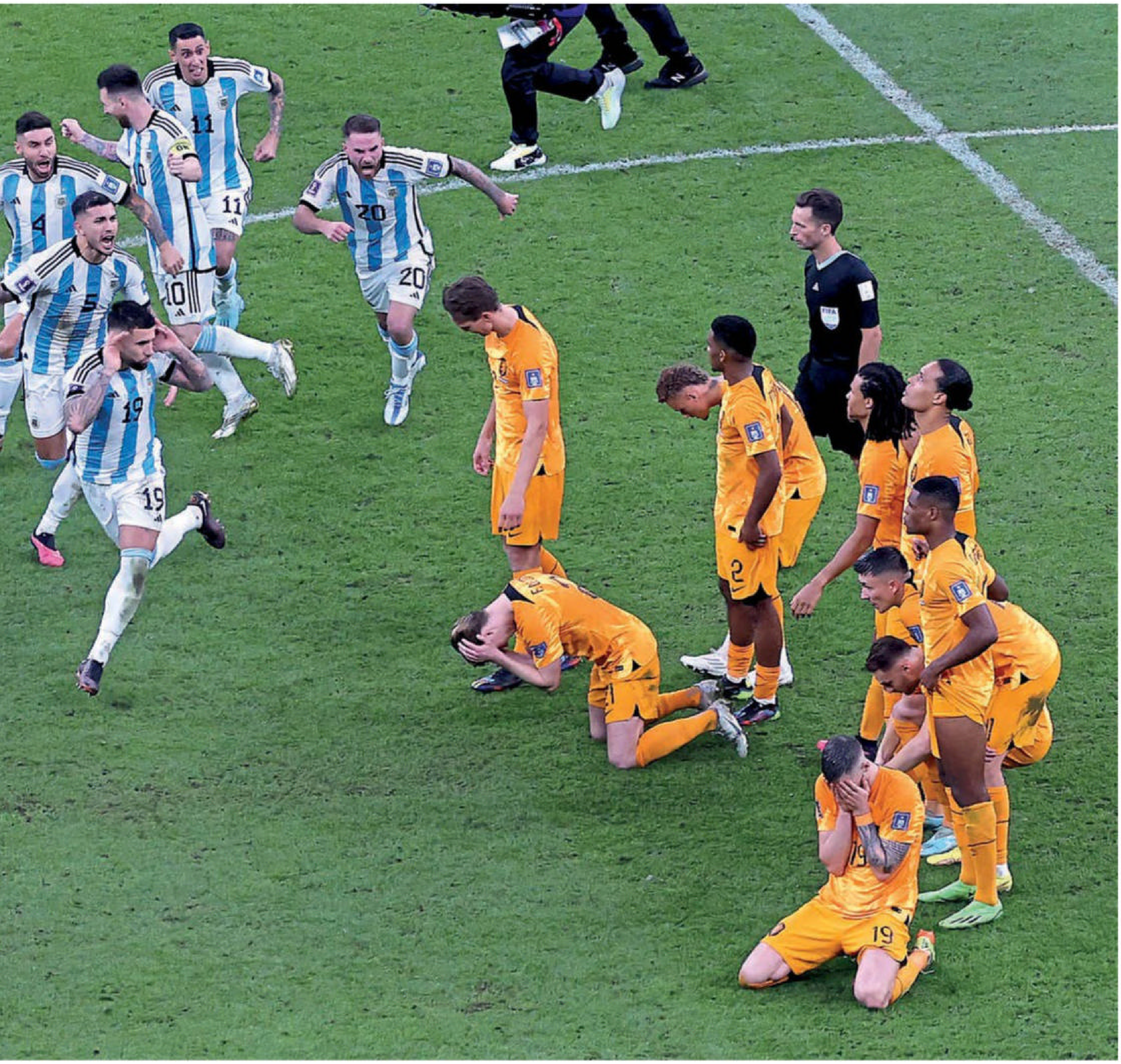
Croatia v Brazil...a distraught Neymar is consoled after losing in a penalty shootout



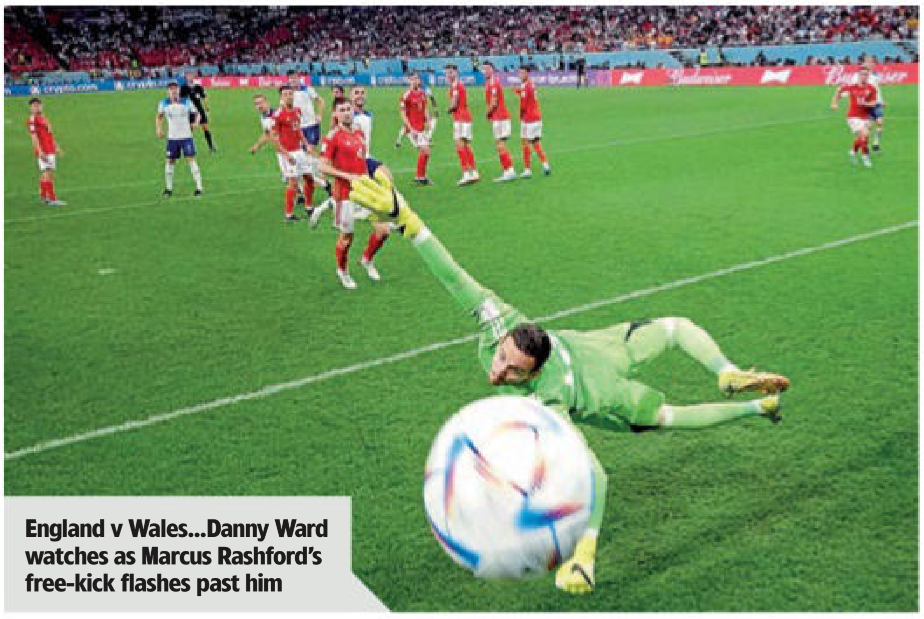
Argentina v Netherlands... *La Albiceleste* celebrate in front of the Dutch after beating them on penalties in the quarter-finals

Morocco v Spain...Sergio Busquets watches his penalty being saved by keeper Yassine Bounou in the last 16

Morocco v Belgium... Achraf Hakimi gets a kiss from his mother after Morocco beat the world's second-highest ranked team



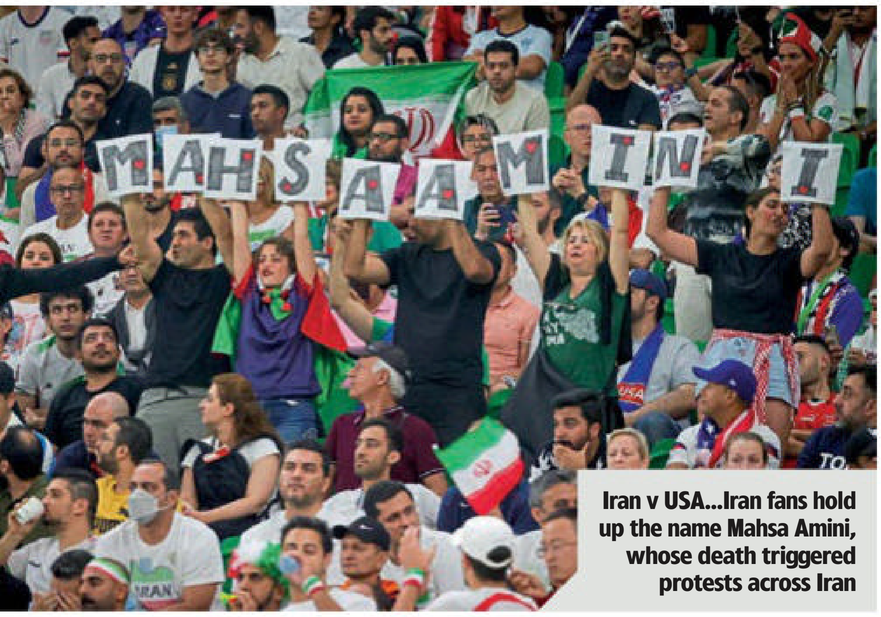
Brazil v South Korea...the Brazilians send their best wishes to Pele after winning their round of 16 clash



England v Wales...Danny Ward watches as Marcus Rashford's free-kick flashes past him

Opening ceremony...fireworks explode around a replica of the World Cup trophy during the finals' opening ceremony

FIFA WORLD CUP



Iran v USA...Iran fans hold up the name Mahsa Amini, whose death triggered protests across Iran

Brazil v Serbia... Richarlison scores with an acrobatic finish

Saudi Arabia v Argentina ...Salem Al Dawsari celebrates his stunning goal in the group stage

FROM THE EDITOR

Wow. What a World Cup. What a World Cup final. FIFA president Gianni Infantino, rather predictably, said the tournament was the "best ever". For quality alone, probably not. But for drama, quite possibly so. Football punditry is often guilty of hyperbole, but the final was, without question, one of the most memorable and dramatic of all time.

After all of the talk and controversy off the pitch, this World Cup needed to deliver *on* the pitch. And that it most certainly did.

For UK TV viewers, the tone delivered by the broadcasters throughout was balanced – after the closing ceremony a review piece was aired questioning whether it was the "greatest World Cup ever or a triumph for sportswashing" while, at the beginning of the tournament, the opening ceremony was relegated to an online-only stream with a special report on Qatar's human rights record aired instead. The obligatory opening-ceremony fireworks were instead left to being produced on the pitch.

Not that the opening game between Qatar and Ecuador produced any. An early decision to rule out Ecuador's opening goal via the new, semi-automated offside technology left viewers baffled, and hundreds of spectators left the stadium early after a lacklustre display by the host nation. A somewhat underwhelming start.

But things were to improve dramatically. Many onlookers were surprised by the vibrant atmosphere at subsequent games – most notably produced by the hordes of fans following Arab nations Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and, in particular, Morocco…not to forget Argentina, who many credited as having the best support in Qatar.

Indeed, it was two of those countries that helped kick-start the tournament. Saudi Arabia's shock win over the Argentines will live long in the memory and will go down in football folklore as the biggest upset in World Cup history alongside the United States shocking England in 1950, Cameroon upsetting Argentina in 1990 and Senegal beating France in 2002.

It helped set a trend – the "World Cup of the underdog" as it was labelled – with plenty of shocks, including Tunisia beating eventual finalists France, Australia sinking Denmark, and Japan edging out European heavyweights Germany and Spain. But Morocco, who saw off Belgium, Canada, Spain and Portugal on their way to becoming the first-ever African nation to make it to the semi-finals, deserve most of the plaudits. Their historic achievement is a game changer for Africa and will likely inspire a generation to come on the continent.

> The final was, without question, one of the most memorable and dramatic of all time

Despite the many upsets, there were also outcomes that many predicted: England once again suffering penalty pain (albeit not via the conventional route of a shootout); Brazil, for the fifth consecutive finals, going out as soon as they came up against a European nation in the knockout stages; and Belgium's golden generation finding this tournament a step too far. And, when it came to the crunch, the cream predictably rose to the top, culminating in a final between Argentina and France; a showdown between Lionel Messi and the heir to his throne, Kylian Mbappe. And what a breathtaking finale it was.

Argentina's victory appeared like destiny for Messi, and for many his Golden Ball performance at these finals now cements his legacy as the greatest of all time. Indeed, Mbappe becoming only the second player to score a World Cup final hat-trick and winning the Golden Boot in the process – but Messi eventually lifting the trophy – seemed like the perfect conclusion. An almost symbolic, microcosmic passing of the torch, and a poetic ending to an enthralling and captivating tournament.

The World Cup final could not have been scripted any better. It was a privilege to watch, and this souvenir issue hopes to capture all of the magic of the latest edition of the greatest football show on Earth. Enjoy.

Stephen Fishlock, Group Editor

WorldSoccer
REVIEW
EVERY GOAL
EVERY GAME
EXPERT ANALYSIS

Leaving…Brazil manager Tite

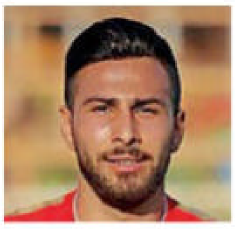
UNITED STATES

Tributes paid to US journalist Grant Wahl

Tributes from players, federations and colleagues poured in for American sports writer Grant Wahl after he passed away while covering the World Cup. The former *Sports Illustrated* journalist was in Qatar covering the quarter-final clash between Argentina and the Netherlands when he collapsed in the press box. Paramedics at the stadium were unable to revive him.

With the United States set to co-host the next World Cup in 2026, Wahl has been widely praised for his role in driving the popularity of football across the country, and is widely considered to be the single most influential journalist in the sport across North America.

> "FIFPRO is shocked and sickened by reports that professional footballer Amir Nasr-Azadani faces execution in Iran after campaigning for women's rights and basic freedom in his country"
>
> **International players' union FIFPRO reacts to the arrest of Iranian defender Amir Nasr-Azadani**



WORLD CUP

Tite, Santos and Enrique lead World Cup casualties

A host of national team managers left their jobs after the World Cup.

As expected, Tite stepped down as coach of Brazil after taking charge of a record 81 games for the *Selecao*, while Luis Enrique left his role as Spain boss after failing to take his side beyond the last 16, with Under-21s coach Luis de la Fuente stepping up to replace him. Fernando Santos also departed after eight years at the Portuguese helm, while Belgium's failure to qualify from their group saw Roberto Martinez leave his role after six years in charge.

Elsewhere, Paulo Bento (South Korea), Otto Addo (Ghana) and Gerardo Martino (Mexico) also all departed following the Qatar finals. Louis van Gaal stepped down as coach of the Netherlands to focus on treatment for prostate cancer, and will be replaced by Ronald Koeman, who left the role in 2020.

"The entire US soccer family is heartbroken to learn that we have lost Grant Wahl," said the United States' Soccer Federation in a statement. "Here in the United States, Grant's passion for soccer and commitment to elevating its profile across our sporting landscape played a major role in helping to drive interest in and respect for our beautiful game."

Grant Wahl
1974 - 2022

Tribute...a picture of Grant Wahl inside the Al Bayt Stadium ahead of England's quarter-final v France

2023 Calendar

FEBRUARY

19	Asian Champions League west zone knockout rounds begin
26	English League Cup final

MARCH

20	2023 West Asian Football Federation Championship begins
21	UEFA Nations League 2022-23 relegation play-outs
23	Euro 2024 qualifying begins
TBC	South American 2026 World Cup qualifying begins

South American champions... Brazil will take on England at Wembley

APRIL

6	Women's Finalissima – England v Brazil
29	Asian Champions League final 1st leg
	French Cup final

MAY

6	Asian Champions League final 2nd leg
	Spanish Cup final
14	Women's FA Cup final
20	Under-20 World Cup begins
24	Italian Cup final
27	Bundesliga final day
28	Premier League final day
	Women's Super League final day
29	EFL Championship play-off final
31	Europa League final
	CONCACAF Champions League final 1st leg

JUNE

3	FA Cup final
	Women's Champions League final
	CONCACAF Champions League final 2nd leg
	Ligue 1 final day
	German Cup final
4	La Liga final day
	Serie A final day
7	Europa Conference League final
10	UEFA Champions League final
11	Under-20 World Cup final
14	UEFA Nations League 2022-23 finals
21	UEFA U21 Championship 2023 begins
24	CONCACAF Gold Cup 2023 begins
TBC	African Champions League final
TBC	CONCACAF Nations League 22-23 finals

Up for grabs... UEFA Nations League trophy

JULY

3	UEFA U19 Championship begins
8	UEFA U21 Championship 2023 final
16	CONCACAF Gold Cup 2023 final
	UEFA U19 Championship final
20	2023 Women's World Cup begins

Women's World Cup... Australia and New Zealand will host the 2023 finals

AUGUST

12	New Premier League season begins
	New Ligue 1 season begins
16	UEFA Super Cup
18	New Bundesliga season begins
20	2023 Women's World Cup final
	New Serie A season begins

SEPTEMBER

4	AFCON 2023 qualifying concludes
19	2023-24 UEFA Champions League begins
TBC	South Asian Football Federation Championship begins

OCTOBER

12	Asian 2026 World Cup qualifying begins
21	Copa Libertadores Femenina final
28	Copa Sudamericana final

NOVEMBER

11	Copa Libertadores final

Keir
RADNEDGE
THE INSIDER

Qatar 2022 marks the end of an era

FIFA WORLD CUP
Qatar2022
HUBLOT

The last of its kind... the 2022 World Cup

This last World Cup marks the end of an era. For this was the last of the World Cups as we have come to know them.

The next finals, in 2026, will be staged in a hosting triumvirate of Canada, Mexico and the United States with a starting line-up of 48 national teams. That tally represents almost one quarter of the FIFA membership. Any team and their coach will need to be pretty awful not to qualify.

A traditional, prestigious standard of single-nation hosting will now also be the exception, not the rule. Three hosts in 2026, two or more in 2030 and then how many in 2034? Once that date appeared wide open for China but the soccer fad there has long since been discarded as redolent of disparaged commercial strategy.

The trend to gigantism is accelerating in every sport. More countries, federations and officials to share out more action and more money. Of course the World Cup still has a long and lively future, but the prestige and value of a qualifying presence will be diminished.

Even oil and gas-rich Qatar recoiled when voices within FIFA began speculating about galloping immediately to 48 teams when the signatures of the old Emir and Sepp Blatter were still wet on the contracts. That was also in the days before FIFAGate caught up with the corrupt exco members who believed that this golden goose would serve their greedy financial appetite forever.

The World Cup was warped by a lustful cabal at the pinnacle of power in Zurich. Several of those still living popped out of the woodwork, to a media feeding-frenzy, to justify themselves in the last weeks before Qatar. Blatter continued to blame Michel Platini for a volte-face after a notorious luncheon with then-French president Nicolas Sarkozy and Qatar's crown prince Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani.

In fact, Colombia has a lot to answer for.

The Colombians had been awarded the 1986 World Cup finals in 1974. Later, FIFA decided on expansion from 16 teams to 24 in time for 1982 in Spain. Within weeks of Italy's final defeat of West Germany in Madrid, so the Colombian government and federation told FIFA they could stage only the 16-team event for which they had signed up.

> The next finals, in 2026, will be staged in a hosting triumvirate of Canada, Mexico and the United States with a starting line-up of 48 national teams. That tally represents almost one quarter of the FIFA membership

FIFA president Joao Havelange stripped Colombia of host rights and, with less than four years to go, set up an emergency exco sub-committee to find a new host in the Americas.

Canada, Mexico and the United States all applied. The Americans sought the high-visibility support of Pele and political heavyweight Henry Kissinger. But Havelange already had his solution: he already had close ties to Mexican media mogul Emilio Azcarraga and the latter's henchman, car-salesman-turned-TV-executive, Guillermo Canedo. At any rate, Mexico won the bid and left the Americans squealing in embarrassed anger. Not for the last time, as it turned out.

That was the fatal point at which FIFA's executive stole the World Cup hosting decision from a full congress. So it remained until after the 2018/2022 awards scandal and the collapse of the House of Blatter in 2015.

One fascination will be how fast the critical focus veers away from the Gulf and settles on the next hosts. Presumably the influence of Mexico's Narco warlords will be scrutinised, the emerging tales of what happened to Canada's indigenous peoples and, as for the United States, where to start?

At least the trio have little more than three years in which to weather the traditional anti-host storm. By contrast, Qatar had 12, a miles-wide vacuum filled to overflowing by corruption claimants, human rights campaigners and labour unions – all laced by competing PR armies up to who knows what manners of spying, hacking and promotional dirty tricks.

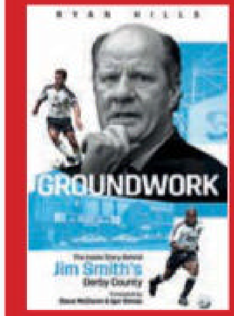
No wonder FIFA president Gianni Infantino and secretary-general Fatma Samoura appeared anxiously rattled as they urged the finalist teams to focus only on the football. They begged: "There are many challenges and difficulties of a political nature all around the world. But please do not allow football to be dragged into every ideological or political battle that exists."

These 2022 finals have been described as the most controversial in the World Cup's history. Really? Most critics – and social media – were not around when the world game landed in Argentina in 1978, a time when the country's dictator Jorge Videla and his junta would drop drugged and bound political opponents into the sea.

One day the single abiding record of the 2022 World Cup in sport's history books will be only the result on the pitch in the Lusail Iconic Stadium. But if these finals also draw a line under the most wretched era in FIFA's history, then so much the better.

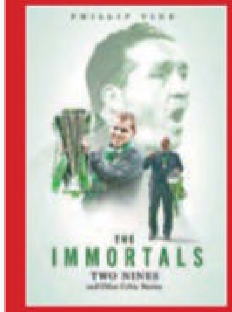
Official announcement...Sepp Blatter announces Qatar as the 2022 World Cup hosts back in 2010

BOOKS THIS MONTH



GROUNDWORK
By Ryan Hills
(Pitch Publishing, £22.99)

When Jim Smith took charge of Derby County in the summer of 1995, he joined a club needing to balance the books after several seasons of failing to reach the Premier League. Little was expected of him. Yet alongside Steve McClaren he oversaw a transformation that took Derby to a new home, a new division and to the brink of European competition for the first time since the days of Dave Mackay. This is the comprehensive and previously untold story of the resurgence of the Rams under "the Bald Eagle's" tutelage.



THE IMMORTALS
By Phillip Vine
(Pitch Publishing, £19.99)

This is a passionate love letter to Celtic FC. After the disappointment in 2021 of failing to complete the fabled ten-in-a-row league titles, it takes solace in researching causes for celebration from Celtic's proud past. The starting point is the rallying cry that "two nines are better than one", and the book's centrepieces are stories of both of Celtic's iconic nine-in-a-row triumphs.

GOALS we'd like to see again

1 TAKUMA ASANO

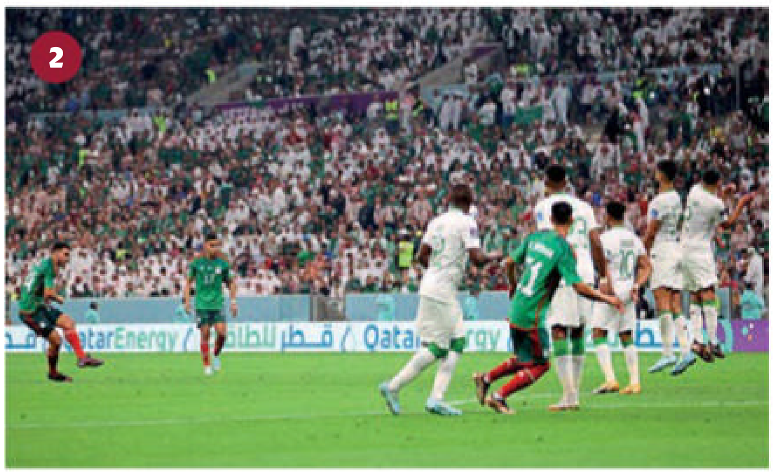
Germany v JAPAN

Shades of Dennis Bergkamp's exquisite effort against Argentina at France '98: a long, dropping ball, expertly controlled over Asano's shoulder, then thumped into the roof of the net.

2 LUIS CHAVEZ

Saudi Arabia v MEXICO

The day after England's Marcus Rashford scored the World Cup's first free-kick, Chavez hit the best: powerfully bending in a brilliant 30-yard rocket with his left foot. Perfection.



3 ALPHONSO DAVIES

Croatia v CANADA

Occasionally football throws up a reminder of just how much it means to people. Canada disappointed in Qatar, but their first-ever World Cup goal – a thumping header by Davies – triggered some of the best celebrations of 2022.

4 MEMPHIS DEPAY

NETHERLANDS v United States

The brilliantly constructed move featured more than 20 passes, superb one-touch football, smart positional changes and an excellent finish: the perfect way to mark Louis van Gaal's last-ever victory as a coach.

5 WOUT WEGHORST

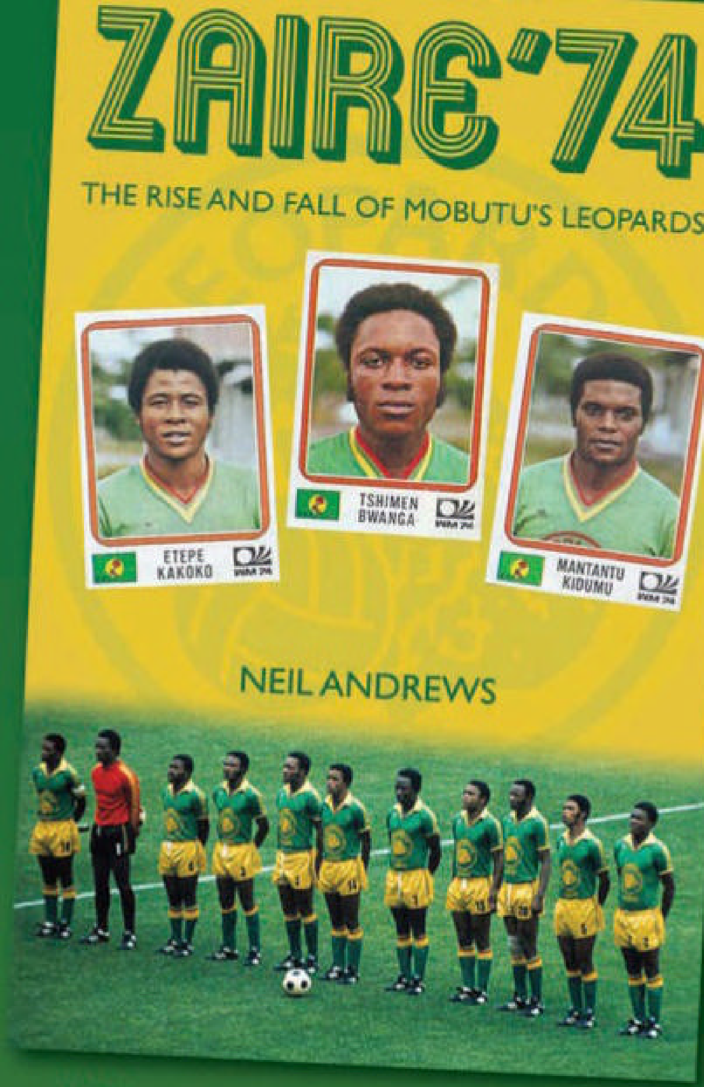
NETHERLANDS v Argentina

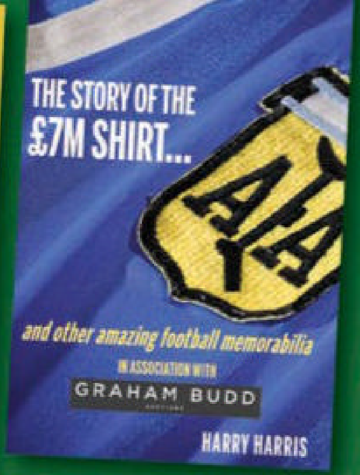
In parks, schoolyards and football cages across the globe, amateur players will have been attempting to recreate this genius free-kick routine.

6 JULIAN ALVAREZ

ARGENTINA v Croatia

Of all the vintage Messi moments in Qatar – sweet strikes versus Mexico and Australia, his exquisite through ball against the Dutch – this was the best. Josko Gvardiol, one of the tournament's best performers, is left dizzy after Leo twists, turns, stops, starts and sprints before giving Alvarez a simple tap-in.


ZAIRE '74
THE RISE AND FALL OF MOBUTU'S LEOPARDS
ETEPE KAKOKO
TSHIMEN BWANGA
MANTANTU KIDUMU
NEIL ANDREWS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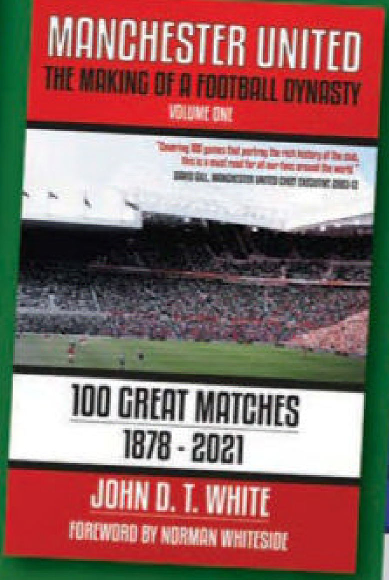
MANCHESTER UNITED
THE MAKING OF A FOOTBALL DYNASTY
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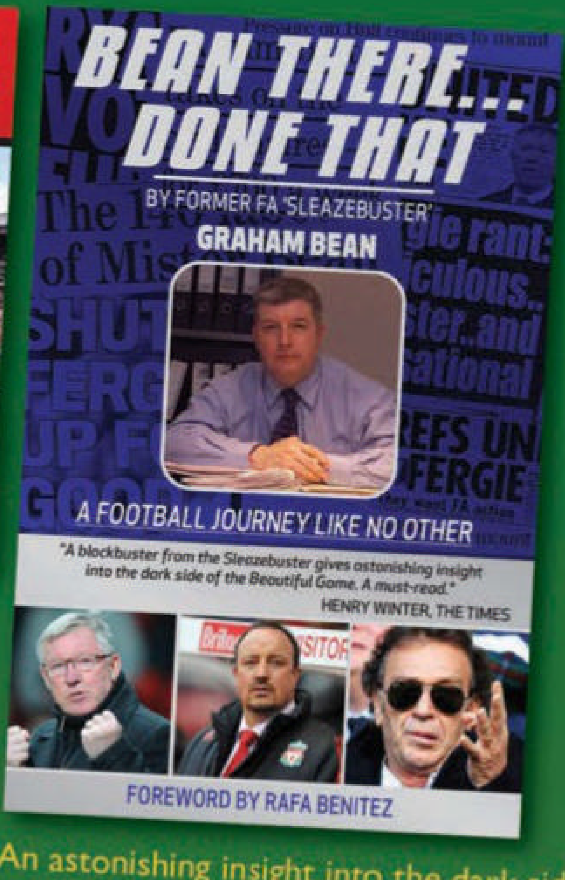
1878 - 2021
JOHN D. T. WHITE
FOREWORD BY NORMAN WHITESIDE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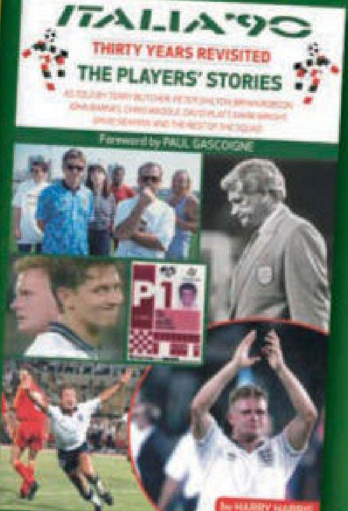
BY FORMER FA 'SLEAZEBUSTER'
GRAHAM BEAN
A FOOTBALL JOURNEY LIKE NO OTHER
"A blockbuster from the Sleazebuster gives astonishing insight into the dark side of the Beautiful Game. A must-read."
HENRY WINTER, THE TIMES
FOREWORD BY RAFA BENITEZ

"An astonishing insight into the dark side of the Beautiful Game. A must-read."
HENRY WINTER, THE TIMES


ITALIA'90
THIRTY YEARS REVISITED
THE PLAYERS' STORIES
Foreword by PAUL GASCOIGNE
by HARRY HARRIS

Neil Andrews traces the fortunes of the first sub-Saharan team to reach the World Cup Finals

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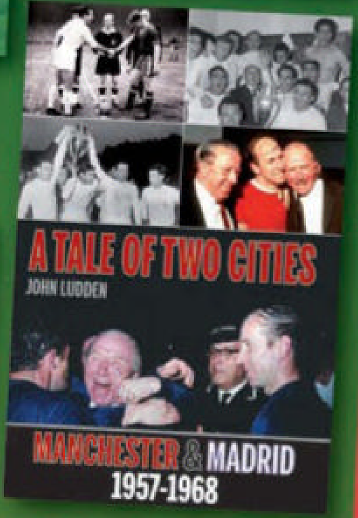
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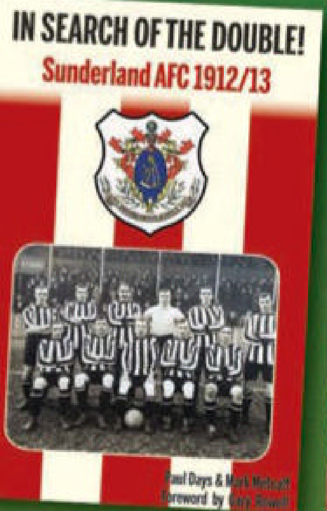
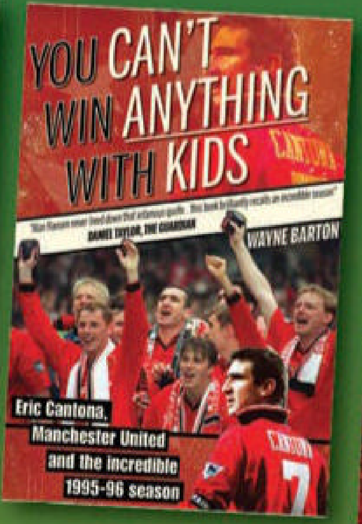
JOHN LUDDEN
MANCHESTER & MADRID
1957-1968


IN SEARCH OF THE DOUBLE!
Sunderland AFC 1912/13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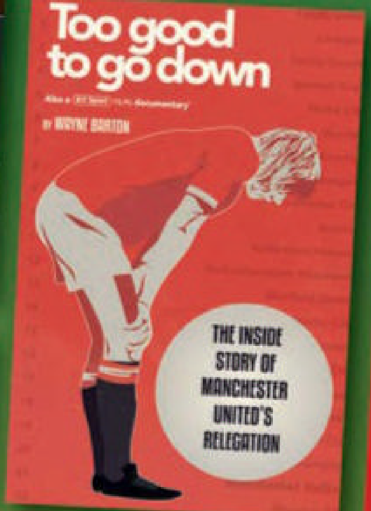
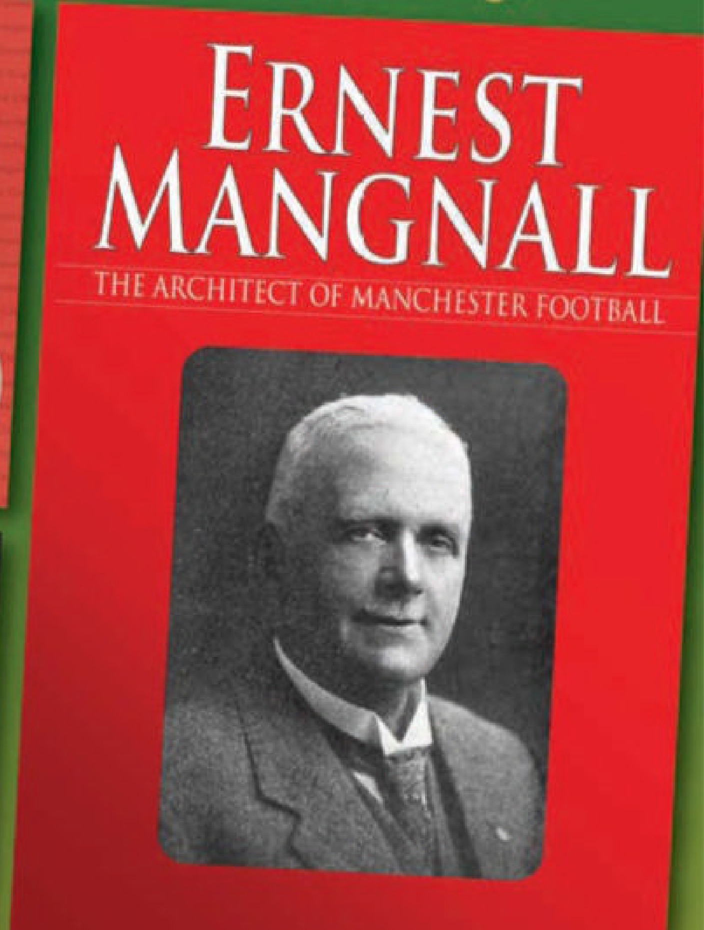
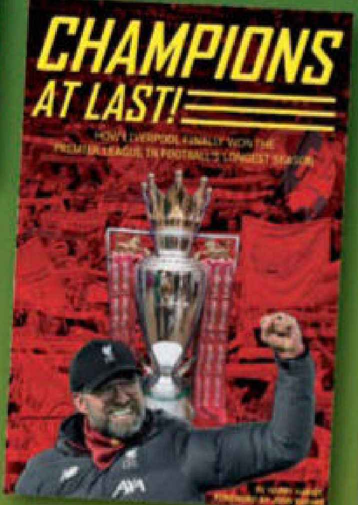
DANIEL TAYLOR, THE GUARDIAN
WAYNE BARTON
Eric Cantona, Manchester United and the incredible 1995-96 season


Too good to go down
BY WAYNE BARTON
THE INSIDE STORY OF MANCHESTER UNITED'S RELEGATION


ERNEST MANGNALL
THE ARCHITECT OF MANCHESTER FOOTBALL
BY IAIN MCCARTNEY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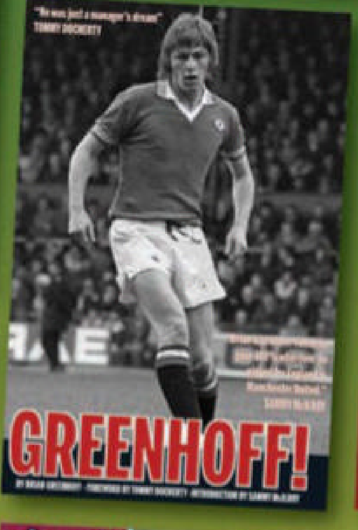
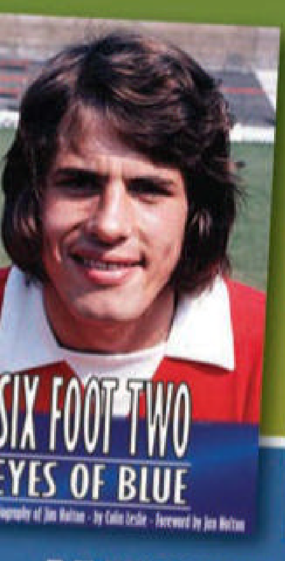
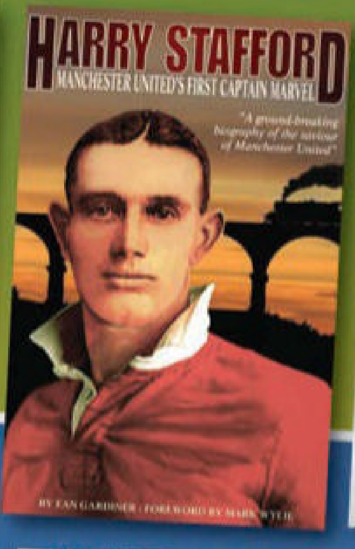
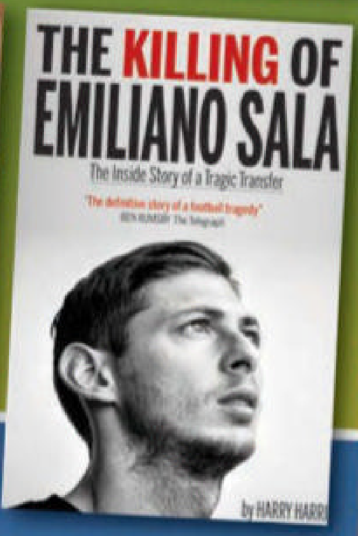
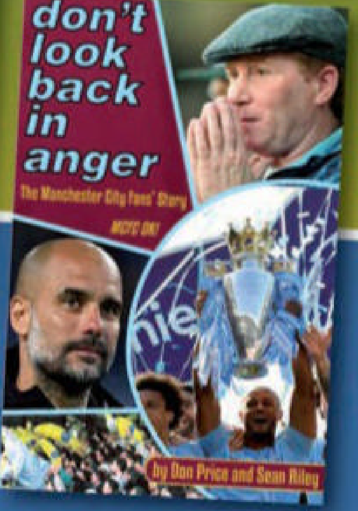

"He was just a manager's dream"
TOMMY DOCHERTY
GREENHOFF!


SIX FOOT TWO
EYES OF BLUE


HARRY STAFFORD
MANCHESTER UNITED'S FIRST CAPTAIN MARVEL


THE KILLING OF EMILIANO SALA
The Inside Story of a Tragic Transfer
"The definitive story of a football tragedy"
by HARRY HARRIS

When football historian Iain McCartney founded the Manchester United Graves Scoiety he was inspired to tell the story of the only man to manage both Manchester clubs.


don't look back in anger
The Manchester City fans' Story
by Dave Wallace and Sean Riley

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OVERVIEW

MESSI: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Argentina's talisman is crowned world champion and football's greatest of all time

The most extraordinary final in World Cup history between the two best teams in the competition and the game's two finest players in Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe was the perfect climax to the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Mbappe, a hat-trick securing the Golden Boot as the finals' eight-goal top scorer, finished on the losing side as France lost the crown secured four years ago in Moscow. But the enduring story of Qatar's controversial World Cup will focus on Messi.

World champions... Messi finally gets his hands on the World Cup trophy

The 35-year-old did not need World Cup success to confirm him as one of the greatest footballers of all time, but most football fans wanted it for him. Messi duly opened the scoring and helped create a second for Angel Di Maria. The match was not even a contest until Mbappe's dramatic, late equalising double, the extra-time seesaw and eventually the shootout – in which Messi set the standard with Argentina's first kick.

Messi's breadth of achievement in Qatar was not only the final. The Argentines owed their very presence in Lusail to his magic. On his 1,000th career appearance he had provided the opening goal in the 2-1 second-round victory over Australia. Then *La Pulga* was the early inspiration in the shootout defeat of Netherlands that defied a late Dutch revival.

Better still, Messi produced the most captivating individual display of the tournament yet in dicing and slicing Croatia in the semi-finals. He opened with a penalty and provided both assists for Julian Alvarez, the second after turning luckless Josip Gvardiol inside-out.

The French, beset by injuries and illness, had had a day less than Argentina to recover from a physically punishing semi-final win over Morocco. That probably proved significant because they started as if in a trance and were then always chasing the game.

The extravaganza cost Qatar £200 billion while FIFA reaped £7bn; history will judge who emerged with the better deal.

In the short term, the glory was snatched by three-time champions Argentina after a tournament which produced generally good, entertaining football. Momentum was maintained from start to finish by a steady string of surprises along with the adventure of Morocco, an Arab-African home team substitute.

Pushed into the background was the negativity arising out of the award amid FIFA corruption, construction workers' deaths – ranging from 400-500 to 6,500 – human rights issues, a three-year Saudi blockade and media rights pirating.

This was not the end of it. On the eve of the finals Qatar barred the sale of alcohol at the stadia when it was too late for FIFA to object. Cynical but not surprising, it was still humiliating for FIFA and for president Gianni Infantino – even though he finished up parroting the old Sepp Blatter line about "the best World Cup ever."

Further complications arose over seven countries' plan for their captains to wear a OneLove armband. That was quashed by FIFA with threats of yellow or red cards. Hence Germany's players put their hands over their mouths in an eloquent anti-censorship gesture in the photo-call before playing Japan.

Arsene Wenger, FIFA's grandly-titled chief of global football development, suggested these political distractions were to blame for the early exits of Denmark and four-time champions Germany. This was nonsense. England, Australia and the United States were all vocal about human rights and reached the knockout stages. Iran were also first-round fallers but entangled in political issues all of their own. Equally, Morocco's remarkable progress was in no way hindered by their waving of the Palestinian flag.

Dancing out…Brazil players celebrate a goal against South Korea

The major surprises of the group stage were those eliminations of the Danes, the Germans and the Belgians, plus the fact that Qatar were so poor. The hosts had been gifted 12 years to prepare and were Asian champions, yet became only the second hosts (after South Africa in 2010) to fall so fast.

Fairy tale…Morocco players celebrate after knocking out Portugal

Fortunately for Arab honour, the baton was picked up in gloriously entertaining style by Saudi Arabia in a thrilling comeback victory over Argentina, by Tunisia in a homeward-bound defeat of France and, most notably, by Morocco in both group and knockout phases. When the Atlas Lions roared into the semi-finals it seemed as if all of Arabia had joined the hunt.

Argentina and Messi recovered, emboldened from their Saudi upset in Group C, while France immediately stamped their class on Group D. No problems either in Group B for England. They achieved their best-ever start to a World Cup by defeating Iran 6-2, but Wales, back after 64 years, could only draw 1-1 with the USA. A late penalty from captain Gareth Bale provided their only goal and only point.

Japan contributed even more to the dramatics than Saudi Arabia. Samurai Blue launched Group E with a shock 2-1 comeback win over Germany and ended it by defeating Spain in identical fashion. At one point, as the goals flowed in the last Group E matches, both Spain and Germany were going out. In the end it was Germany who failed on goal difference despite beating Costa Rica 4-2. The tie was also notable for Stephanie Frappart becoming the first woman to referee at a men's World Cup finals.

This was the Germans' second successive group-stage departure from the finals. Coach Hansi Flick has a job on his hands turning the ship around in time for Germany's hosting of Euro 2024. He needs to find an entire new defence and someone to score goals. As Jurgen Klinsmann moaned: "We don't make number nines any more."

Morocco's draw with Croatia and defeats of Belgium and Canada made them the first African nation to top a group since 1998. Luka Modric and Croatia, runners-up

THINGS WE LEARNED

1 32 TEAMS IS THE PERFECT SIZE

The last-ever 32-team World Cup highlighted why it is the perfect format for a World Cup. Almost every group had drama and jeopardy right up to the final minutes, neatly resulting in the 16 best sides heading to the knockouts. Quite how the 48-team tournament will work in four years is still to be decided, but talk of penalty shootouts in the first round show just how flawed the format could be.

2 BRIGHTON CAN SCOUT

Alexis Mac Allister made history by becoming the first-ever Brighton & Hove Albion player to appear in a World Cup final, yet he was just one of many Seagulls superstars to feature in Qatar. Pervis Estupinan, Moises Caicedo, Jeremy Sarmiento (all Ecuador), Leandro Trossard (Belgium), Kaoru Mitoma (Japan), Robert Sanchez (Spain) and Tariq Lamptey (Ghana) demonstrated just how effective the Premier League club's data-led recruitment model is.

Classy veteran...Luka Modric

3 YOUTH + EXPERIENCE IS KEY

Analysis of Belgium's group-stage exit that claimed their team was "too old" was proven simplistic by the likes of Lionel Messi, Luka Modric, Olivier Giroud and others, who guided their teams to the latter stages. Those players were all aided and rejuvenated by the presence of younger, fresher legs alongside them – something that Belgium failed to do.

4 FINISHERS JUST AS KEY AS STARTERS

Squad sizes of 26 and an allocation of five substitutions per game allowed managers to change games more than ever in Qatar, and they took that chance. Of the 172 goals scored at the finals – a new tournament record – 30 (17.4 per cent) were scored by substitutes, just short of the record, set in 2014, of 32 (18.7 per cent). Champions Argentina bucked the trend, with only one of their 15 goals scored by a sub: Enzo Fernandez's curler v Mexico in the group stage.

5 AUTOMATED OFFSIDES NOT PERFECT

Hopes that offside controversies would become a thing of the past with the introduction of semi-automated technology were dashed within the opening minutes of the tournament, as a marginal offside that nobody appealed for (or spotted) ruled out Enner Valencia's header for Ecuador – the first of several similar calls. Dreams of a future without refereeing controversy appear to be futile.

in Russia in 2018, slipped through in a workmanlike second place and ultimately won the third-place play-off; the squabbling veterans of Belgium flew home unlamented.

Brazil danced through Group G despite an early ankle injury to Neymar and a first World Cup defeat by an African nation at the hands of Cameroon. Group H witnessed what turned out to be a deceptively happier start for another superstar as Cristiano Ronaldo set Portugal on their way by converting a soft penalty in a 3-2 win over Ghana. Portugal's captain thus became the first player to score in five men's World Cups: his first and last reason to celebrate.

With the group stage concluded, Wenger emerged from his technical study conclave to opine that most goals had emanated from attacks down the wings. It took a team of 78 data analysts and six superannuated coaches to come up with that.

The round of 16 produced two penalty shootouts and one further surprise. Spain, weighed down by Luis Enrique's old-fashioned *tiki-taka*, were ambushed by a Morocco who sparked memories of the turbocharged energy of South Korea in the last Asian finals, in 2002.

The rest went with form for Croatia, Netherlands, Argentina, England, France, Brazil and Portugal, for whom young striker Goncalo Ramos scored a hat-trick on his first start after Ronaldo was controversially left on the bench by coach Fernando Santos. CR7's last tilt at the World Cup crashed and burned, unworthily and painfully, in tears.

Most self-embarrassing fallers in the quarter-finals were Brazil, to shootout specialists Croatia. Brazil defrauded themselves. They should have spent a little more time on defensive discipline and less on dance routines. "This is who we are," snapped coach Tite. But this was also Qatar not Copacabana. Self-defeating arrogance without cause.

The pity was that Neymar had been outstanding against Croatia. He played with commitment and focus, eschewed his self-indulgent tendencies and scored one of the finest goal of the finals after a rapid-fire double exchange of passes. Yet he had long left the stage when his Paris Saint-Germain team-mates stepped up for the final act.

If Argentina were the headline winners it has to be stated, for the record, that these finals were a staging triumph for FIFA and Qatar, if not a political one.

Dumped out...Spain players react to their penalty-shootout defeat to Morocco

Under pressure...coach Hansi Flick saw Germany go out in the groups again

For the first time, teams from all five major continents reached the round of 16. Also, for the first time, three teams from the AFC (Australia, Japan and South Korea) reached the knockout stages, and, for only the second time, two African teams (Senegal and Morocco) progressed to the knockout phase – the last time being in 2014.

Critical forecasts that nobody would turn up were routed by the crowd statistics. A ticket-sale tally of nearly 3.4 million gave the lie to claims that supporters would be put off by the heat, by the pre-Christmas timing, by the cost and all the rest.

At the final whistle not only were France beaten, so were the merchants of doom and gloom.

Keir Radnedge

OPENING THE DOOR FOR AFRICA

In Qatar, Morocco made history not only for themselves but for their entire continent

There might have been some disappointment with their semi-final exit from the World Cup, but there was also a real sense of achievement after Morocco broke new ground for themselves, African and Arab football at the World Cup in Qatar.

Weary bodies, broken hearts and desolate faces but also immense pride after an incredible tournament that has the potential to be a game changer for African football.

Morocco's exciting run to a first-ever World Cup semi–

Jubilant...Morocco players celebrate after Achraf Hakimi's winning penalty against Spain

final will inject a new energy into African football and give hope to the continent's teams when they return in larger numbers in four years' time, with nine places at the 2026 finals in North America, and possibly one more through the play-offs.

African football had been in a crisis of confidence after the last World Cup in Russia, when none of the five teams made it out of the group phase. But that has all changed with the performance of Walid Regragui's team in Qatar. Beating Belgium, Canada, Spain and Portugal saw Morocco go where no African team had gone before and they are now a reference point for others to try to emulate.

"We're pleased with what we've achieved. We felt that we could have gone even further but were undone by the small details that make real champions," reflected Regragui.

It all started in their first game against Croatia with something of a surprise: the crowd. Few had figured that the North African teams – Morocco and Tunisia – would be so generously supported in Qatar, but both have large migrant communities living and working in the country and they were immediately able to hand their teams an edge.

Morocco were able to feed off the feverish passion from the stands as the red-clad army of supporters added an extra decibel or two to the noise and willed their team to a draw with the highly-fancied Croatia and then victory over Belgium.

If ever there was a side at this World Cup with a veritable 12th man, it was the Moroccans, whose level of play at the tournament had been raised a notch or two by the vociferous support.

With 20 minutes left against Belgium, and the score still 0-0, Morocco were visibly tiring, the ferocity of the tussle taking its toll on players who rarely play in matches of such intensity.

The din of a concerned crowd transformed into a tumultuous racket when sub Abdelhamid Sabiri's free-kick caught out Thibaut Courtois at his near post and captain Romain Saiss added a slight touch to see Morocco into the lead.

The supporters' enthusiasm injected a second wind into the players' legs – so much so that they were not only able to see off Belgium's desperate efforts to get back into the game, but go on to add a second goal, through another substitute Zakaria Aboukhlal, and secure a famous victory.

"There is no doubt they played a huge role in lifting us," admitted Morocco's key attacker Hakim Ziyech after the match.

As they progressed into the knockout phase – and with the elimination of hosts Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia – Morocco could also count on the support of the Arab world, both those visiting Qatar and further afield.

"The world as a whole is proud of this Moroccan team because we show great desire. We work hard, and we played honest, hard-working football," added Regragui.

Faith repaid... Youssef En-Nesyri celebrates scoring against Portugal

Unpopular...former coach Vahid Halilhodzic during the Africa Cup of Nations

"I think we've given a good image of Morocco and a good image of African football and that was also important for us, because we were representing our country and our continent."

For hosts Qatar, it also added an Arab dimension to the latter stages of the tournament – vindication in a way for all the criticism that they had to endure.

Morocco did not always entertain, it must be added. They played a very tight defensive game and gave little space away without possession. Their defensive block was solid and in many games they were only attacking on the counter.

This was most evident against Spain in the last 16 when they knocked out Luis Enrique's side on penalties. Morocco certainly dodged many bullets in the game, and their intention of trying to take the game to a penalty shootout was clear from early on. In fact, they celebrated ahead of the penalty shootout, knowing they had survived a dominant Spanish performance.

Rearguard actions are never pretty and a dangerous exercise at the best of times, but somehow the Moroccans held on to take a major scalp.

This came despite the loss of their key defender Nayef Aguerd, who they tried to get back on the field to face France but he could not get through the pre-match warm-up.

There were other injuries too, but players like Saiss and Sofyan Amrabat played through them, putting their bodies on the line for the country and the team.

Much of the credit for that spirit must lie with coach Regragui, who was able to change the mood dramatically in the space of just a few months and injected a newfound passion into the squad.

His man management skills look to be his greatest asset.

"The key for us is team spirit," he explained during the tournament. "Now we play more like a club, not a national team. Everybody wants it. Everybody's working, everybody is giving their best in every way and we play a collective game every time with a good spirit, which for me is everything in football."

It had not looked that way over the past year, even if the Atlas Lions qualified relatively easily with the best record in the African qualifiers.

Morocco had gone into the World Cup with potential but also taking something of a gamble. They had fired Vahid Halilhodzic just months before the finals. The veteran Bosnian coach went the same way he had with Japan four years earlier, proving unpopular with the players, accused of creating a sour atmosphere while also being tough for the federation to deal with.

Among the players that he fell out with was Ziyech, who quit the national team in protest. When Morocco disappointed at the

> “We’ve given a good image of Morocco and a good image of African football”
> Morocco coach Walid Regragui

Africa Cup of Nations finals in Cameroon at the start of 2022, the pressure to get the winger back into the fold increased immensely.

Halilhodzic had accused Ziyech of not pulling his weight, but the fans were on the side of the player, and so was the press.

Without Ziyech at the Cup of Nations, Morocco looked dull and ineffective, with Halilhodzic struggling for solutions. The possibility that he would again be fired before a World Cup was already on the cards then.

Regragui’s first act when he was appointed as replacement was to get Ziyech back. Noussair Mazraoui, the Bayern Munich full-back, and Amine Harit – two other players who had fallen foul of Halilhodzic – had already had a reconciliation with the Bosnian coach in the weeks before but it was not enough to save his job.

“The Moroccan people wanted to see him and were encouraging him, and he responded to that. We need to give him responsibility, and he needs to be loved. It’s like Neymar for Brazil or Kylian Mbappe for France, you can’t just see him as another player, he’s your best player,” added Regragui about the mercurial Ziyech.

“Some coaches say all players should be treated equally, but that’s not the case. Hakim is not just another player, I show him love and respect because it’s what he deserves. Like Achraf Hakimi, the other players as well. They’ve shown they are prepared to give everything for the national team when they play.”

But to be fair to Halilhodzic, Regragui did not change much about the team. One of Morocco’s best players, Azzedine Ounahi, had been spotted by Halilhodzic and thrown straight into the starting line-up for his first cap at the Cup of Nations finals in January. He did not miss a match all year after that and now has Barcelona reportedly chasing his signature.

“Which opposing player impressed me? I was pleasantly surprised by the number eight. I no longer remember his name, I’m sorry about that,” said Luis Enrique, highlighting Ounahi’s lack of profile after Morocco had knocked his team out of the competition.

Mastermind...
Walid Regragui

Amrabat in the midfield was another outstanding performer who stayed in place along with right-back Hakimi, who had an absorbing battle with his Paris Saint-Germain team-mate Kylian Mbappe in the semi-final.

Goalkeeper Yassine Bounou (aka “Bono”) was steady and made some top saves, none more so than in the penalty-shootout victory against Spain.

Up front Youssef En-Nesyri sometimes had to plough a lone furrow. But he made his mark too with the extraordinary winning goal against Portugal in the quarter-final, leaping to a height of 2.78 metres as he climbed above the Portuguese defence to score the only goal of the game.

“I’ve always believed in Youssef,” added Regragui. “Even Moroccan journalists criticised me when I defended him, but he’s here. I accepted the criticism and I said to him he is a top player. He’s the top scorer in history for Morocco at the World Cup [with three goals].

“Coaches have reasons for choices and I’ve always believed in him, because of his energy on the pitch, that’s why he plays for Sevilla.

“He’s like Giroud for France, he works so hard for the team. Sometimes these types of strikers are criticised. He’s from Morocco, he trained in Morocco and he’s an important player. I’m very proud of him. His goal was a sign of destiny.”

Before Morocco’s achievement, African football had only three quarter-final appearances to boast about – Cameroon in 1990, Senegal in 2002 and Ghana in 2010. Those countries knocked on the door for the continent with their proud World Cup runs, but now Morocco have barged right through it. Having seemingly broken through the glass ceiling, there will be a confidence that the historic performance of the Atlas Lions can be repeated by other African nations at future finals.

Mark Gleeson

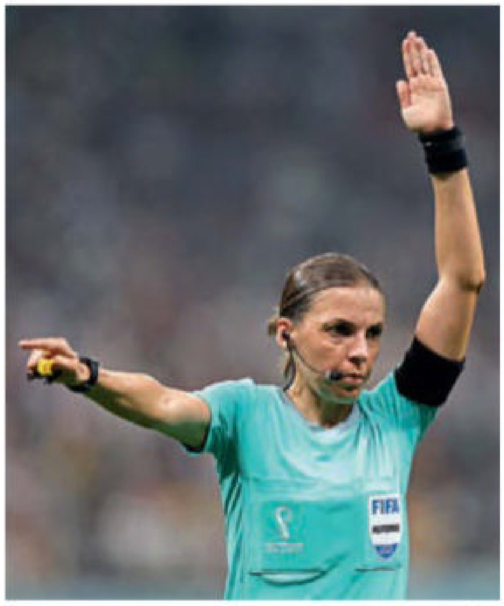
Moroccan maestros...winger Hakim Ziyech and midfielder Azzedine Ounahi

Heartbroken...goalkeeper Yassine Bounou consoles Bilal El Khannouss

A to Z

A is for Added time. Referees took time wasting very seriously, often with plenty of time added on at the end of each half.

B is for Barcelona, the club side with the most players at the tournament, with 17 in total.



Female referee...Stephanie Frappart

C is for Compact. The furthest distance between any of the host stadiums was just 34 miles.

D is for Drama. Nearly every group had final-day twists and turns, while the final was one of the best and most dramatic of all time.

E is for End of an Era. Many of the last decade's finest players probably played their last World Cup, including the likes of Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez, Luka Modric, Cristiano Ronaldo, Sergio Busquets, Gareth Bale and Robert Lewandowski.

F is for Female referee. France's Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a game at a FIFA men's World Cup finals.

G is for Growth. This will be the last World Cup of its kind with the 2026 tournament being expanded from 32 to 48 teams.

H is for Heat. Though it was a winter World Cup temperatures were still high, though cooled slightly by air conditioning in stadiums.

I is for Iconic. The 88,966-seater, self-described Iconic Stadium in Lusail hosted ten games in total, including the World Cup final

J is for Jude Bellingham. The 19-year-old Borussia Dortmund midfielder was one of England's stars of the tournament and the subject of increased transfer speculation.

In demand... Jude Bellingham, one of the Three Lions' standout stars

Kylian Mbappe...World Cup legend

Politics...Germany players protest

Shock result...Saudi Arabia celebrate scoring against Argentina

K is for Kylian Mbappe, the heir to Ronaldo and Messi, who at 23 already has as many WC goals as Pele.

L is for Lionel Messi, who finally won the World Cup and showed why he is considered by many as the greatest of all time.

M is for Media. It was one of the toughest tournaments for media to cover, balancing off-field issues with the on-field entertainment.

N is for 974. Stadium 974 (named after Qatar's international dialling code) hosted seven matches and was built out of 974 shipping containers. It is now being dismantled and could be transported to the 2030 hosts if Uruguay wins as part of a joint-bid.

O is for Offside. Semi-automated offside technology was used at the World Cup for the first time.

P is for Politics. This tournament proved that football and politics are inseparable, especially at international level.

Q is for Qatar. The first Arab nation to host the World Cup, though not without controversy.

R is for Ratings. World Cup matches broke TV viewing records across the world.

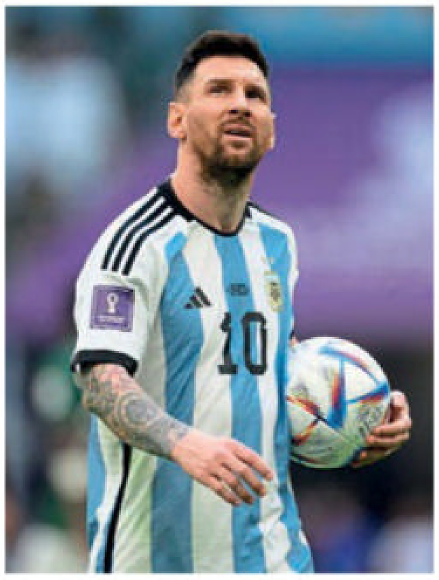
S is for Shock results, the most notable of which was Saudi Arabia defeating Argentina in the Group C opener, although Germany's first-round exit was also a big surprise.

T is for Three Lions. No side scored more goals or accumulated more points in the group stage than England.

U is for Unusual. This was the first men's World Cup not held in the months between May and July.

V is for Vincent Aboubakar, whose sending off for removing his shirt after scoring the winner for Cameroon against Brazil was iconic.

W is for Worldwide. For the first time ever, all the continents represented at the World Cup made it to the knockout stages.

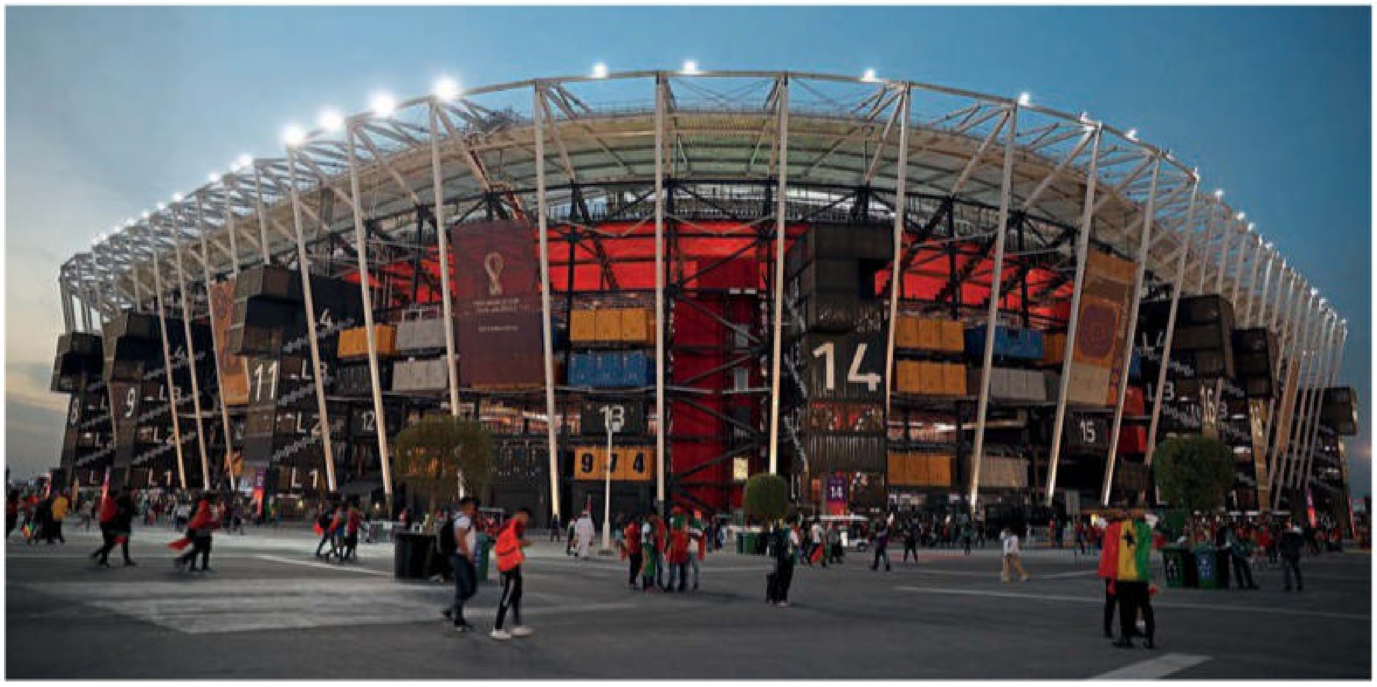


Lionel Messi...last World Cup

X is for Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri. The X factors for Switzerland, who finished level on points with Brazil in Group G.

Y is for Yellow cards, 18 of which were brandished in the Argentina-Netherlands clash – a new WC record.

Z is for Zero alcohol. A decision was made two days before the tournament began to not serve alcohol in or around stadiums.



Stadium 974...the unique venue in Doha was built out of 974 shipping containers

PLAYERS OF THE TOURNAMENT

FIFA award winners... Fernandez, Messi, Martinez and Mbappe

Revelation... Antoine Griezmann

GOALKEEPER

EMILIANO MARTINEZ

(Argentina)

Came into his own in the final with his incredible, last-gasp save from Randal Kolo Muani and penalty-shootout heroics. His late stop from Australia's Garang Kuol and penalty-shootout antics against the Dutch were unforgettable too. *Honourable mentions*: **Dominik Livakovic** (Croatia) – outstanding against Brazil and in two victorious penalty shootouts. **Wojciech Szczesny** (Poland) – made more saves than any other goalkeeper in the group stage, including a Lionel Messi penalty. **Yassine Bounou** (Morocco) – three clean sheets, two saves in the penalty-shootout win over Spain and one of the saves of the tournament against Portugal.

Panenka ...Achraf Hakimi

RIGHT-BACK

ACHRAF HAKIMI

(Morocco)

Another integral member of the Moroccan back line that was so hard to breach. Made the most tackles and produced one of the moments of the tournament: a Panenka penalty to beat Spain – his birth country – in the shootout. *Honourable mentions*: **Josip Juranovic** (Croatia) – played every minute of Croatia's run to the semis. Brilliant against Brazil – in defence and attack. **Denzel Dumfries** (Netherlands) – two assists and a goal against the USA.

CENTRE-BACKS

HARRY MAGUIRE

(England)

Despite fierce criticism, Maguire showed why Gareth Southgate has such faith in him. Dominated aerially and passed crisply.

JOSKO GVARDIOL

(Croatia)

One of the best young talents in Qatar formed a solid partnership with **Dejan Lovren** and made more clearances than any other player. *Honourable mentions*: **Rodri** (Spain) – excelled in an unfamiliar centre-back role. **Harry Souttar** (Australia) – kicked, blocked or headed anything that came into the box. **Pepe** (Portugal) – this WC finals' second-oldest outfield player remains as solid as ever.

LEFT-BACK

IVAN PERISIC

(Croatia)

In a finals with a dearth of truly outstanding left-back performers, we've picked a part-timer. Perisic started there against Morocco but underlined his versatility by filling in when required and doing his best work in attack, collecting one goal and registering three assists. *Honourable mentions*: **Noussair Mazraoui** (Morocco) – shared left-back duties with **Yahya Attiat Allah**, with both excelling. **Theo Hernandez** (France) – got a couple of assists, but was then tormented by Bukayo Saka in the quarter-finals before bouncing back to score in the semi-finals. **Aziz Behich** (Australia) – caught the eye in the group stage and almost scored a worldie solo goal in the last 16 against Argentina. **Marcos Acuna** (Argentina) – deserves credit for his part in Argentina's turnaround after the shock Saudi Arabia loss, providing energy and balance to the team.

MIDFIELDERS

JUDE BELLINGHAM

(England)

The 19-year-old played with, quite frankly, ludicrous levels of maturity, confidence, energy and authority. With **Declan Rice** alongside him, England have their midfield core in place for the next decade.

SOFYAN AMRABAT

(Morocco)

Played more minutes for Morocco than any other player. Combative, destructive and full of energy, the anchorman patrolled proceedings expertly in front of the defence. Perfectly complemented **Azzedine Ounahi** in the middle of the park.

Combative... Sofyan Amrabat

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN

(France)

Swept aside France's midfield concerns by playing like he's been there his whole career. Conducted attacks and did his defensive work. *Honourable mentions*: **Luka Modric** (Croatia) – simply ageless and as good as ever. **Frenkie de Jong** (Netherlands) – always available for the ball. **Tyler Adams** (USA) – the captain and leader of USA's energetic midfield. **Alexis Mac Allister** (Argentina) – inventive, adaptable and impressive. **Jamal Musiala** (Germany) – mercurial talent and the one shining light for Germany. **Bruno Fernandes** (Portugal) – got goals and assists. **Enzo Fernandez** (Argentina) – won FIFA's best Young Player award.

FORWARDS

BUKAYO SAKA

(England)

Another reason why England's future is so bright. The 21-year-old scored three and was the Three Lions' biggest threat versus France.

LIONEL MESSI

(Argentina)

Consistently produced moments of pure magic – despite playing most of the game at walking pace.

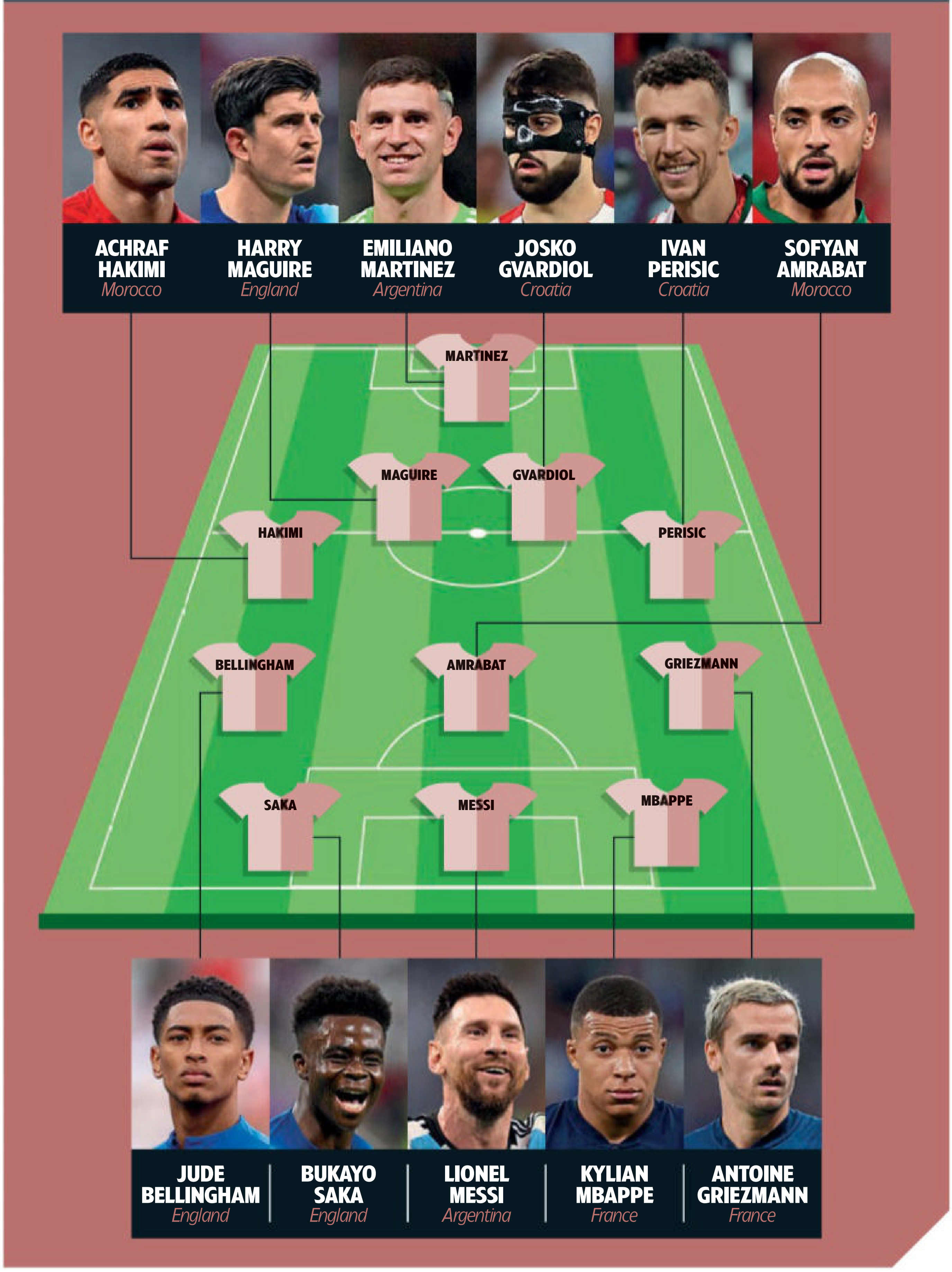
KYLIAN MBAPPE

(France)

As well as his goals, Mbappe terrified opponents, dominating their preparations for each match. *Honourable mentions*: **Cody Gakpo** (Netherlands) – scored in each group game. **Olivier Giroud** (France) – led the line selflessly and became France's all-time top scorer. **Julian Alvarez** (Argentina) – a revelation in Argentina's attack after replacing Lautaro Martinez.

Big threat... Bukayo Saka

TEAM OF THE TOURNAMENT


ACHRAF HAKIMI Morocco
HARRY MAGUIRE England
EMILIANO MARTINEZ Argentina
JOSKO GVARDIOL Croatia
IVAN PERISIC Croatia
SOFYAN AMRABAT Morocco
MARTINEZ
MAGUIRE
GVARDIOL
HAKIMI
PERISIC
BELLINGHAM
AMRABAT
GRIEZMANN
SAKA
MESSI
MBAPPE
JUDE BELLINGHAM England
BUKAYO SAKA England
LIONEL MESSI Argentina
KYLIAN MBAPPE France
ANTOINE GRIEZMANN France

TEAM BY TEAM *group-stage exit*

Three goals... Enner Valencia

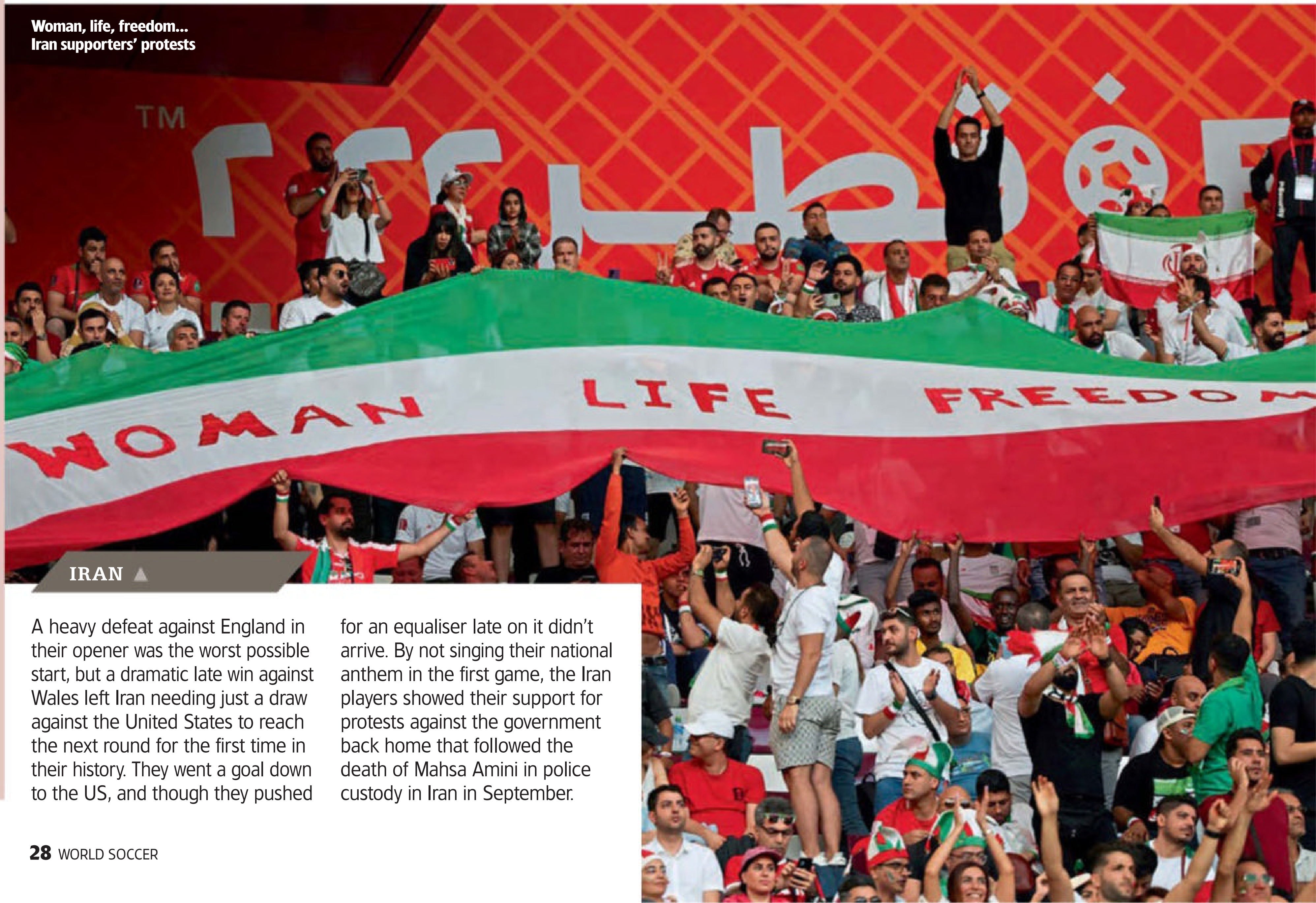
ECUADOR ▲

An exciting young team but one whose star happened to be their 33-year-old striker and captain Enner Valencia, who scored three goals in the group stage. A defeat to Senegal in the final group game led to an anticlimactic exit from the tournament, but this bunch – with a core of players in their early 20s including star midfielder Moises Caicedo of Brighton – will more than likely be back stronger for future World Cups, as well as the intervening Copa America.

QATAR ▼

Having finished with the worst record for a host nation in the history of the World Cup, the tournament couldn't have gone any worse for Qatar who lost all three of their group games. An extended training camp meant players hadn't played competitive club football for over six months heading into the tournament, which appeared to hinder rather than help them once it began. They did manage one goal, though; a memorable moment for their scorer, the Ghanaian-born Mohammed Muntari, who gave the home fans something to cheer about amid an otherwise dispiriting finals.

Solitary...Muntari nets Qatar's only World Cup goal



Woman, life, freedom... Iran supporters' protests

IRAN ▲

A heavy defeat against England in their opener was the worst possible start, but a dramatic late win against Wales left Iran needing just a draw against the United States to reach the next round for the first time in their history. They went a goal down to the US, and though they pushed for an equaliser late on it didn't arrive. By not singing their national anthem in the first game, the Iran players showed their support for protests against the government back home that followed the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody in Iran in September.

WALES ▼

These finals for Rob Page's side were all about the experience of finally qualifying for a World Cup, but the Dragons will not want it to be a once-in-a-lifetime event. Once in Qatar the side were disappointing, and have plenty of rebuilding to do now that players like Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey are reaching the twilight of their careers. They impressed in flashes against the US but couldn't replicate any of that in a winnable game against Iran, or against England, losing both games. An enjoyable journey, but work to be done if it is to be repeated.

End of an era... Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey

Heartbreak...Luis Chavez reacts to Mexico's exit

MEXICO ▲

El Tri ended a seven-tournament run of exiting World Cups at the last 16 by not making it past the group stage in Qatar. It's not the way they would have wanted to break that habit, and they were so close to maintaining the run, going out only on goal difference behind Poland. A late Saudi Arabia strike in the final game led to that eventual outcome, but for a while it was so close that they were only below Poland on fair play. Still, an unsatisfactory early exit, with fresh blood likely incoming following Gerardo Martino's departure.

TUNISIA ▼

Wahbi Khazri scored his nation's only goal in the group stage, but despite this lack of goalscoring action, Tunisia were not too far off qualification. What's more, Khazri's goal came in a win over one of the standout teams in the group to that point, France. The World Cup holders had fielded a much-changed line-up, but it was nevertheless an unforgettable victory for the North African side. A narrow defeat to Australia, who eventually qualified along with the French, proved to be their undoing.

Unforgettable... Wahbi Khazri after scoring against France

Massive upset... Salem Al Dawsari celebrates scoring against Argentina

◄ SAUDI ARABIA

A glorious, historic opening-game win against Argentina gave way to disheartening losses to Poland and Mexico. But the goals from Saleh Al Shehri and Salem Al Dawsari that led to victory against Lionel Messi and co. will live long in the memory of Saudi Arabian football. They were much more enterprising than hosts and neighbours Qatar despite being similarly ranked by FIFA. Herve Renard and his players will have been pleased to have contributed to the first World Cup held in an Arab nation.

DENMARK ►

The dark horses and Euro 2020 semi-finalists struggled out of the gate and, like Tunisia, finished Group D with just one goal to their name. Unlike Tunisia, however, the Danes were not able to record a single win at the tournament. This surprised many who had tipped them to qualify from the group and do some damage in the later rounds. Nothing clicked for them, and none of their play was quite up to scratch, not even the delivery of attacking midfield maestro Christian Eriksen.

Dark horses dumped out ...Denmark disappointed

TEAM BY TEAM *group-stage exit*

Impressive... Jamal Musiala

GERMANY ▲

The 2014 world champions have now exited the group stage in successive tournaments. The fall from grace has been sharp, and they have only won two games at World Cup finals since that triumph in Brazil. Jamal Musiala was the one shining light during bleak times for a nation that is normally considered a powerhouse of European football. The 19-year-old Bayern Munich wonderkid, who represented England at youth level, was one of their standout players, but even he couldn't find the cutting edge required.

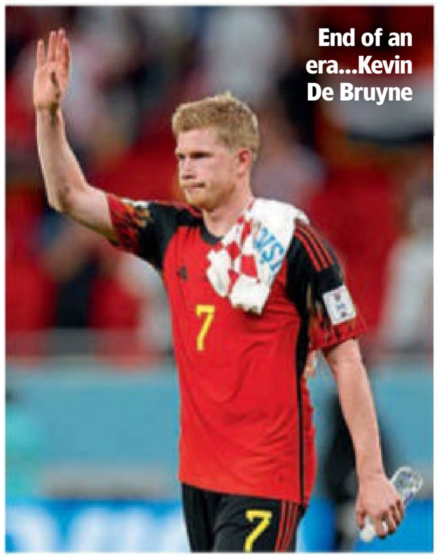
COSTA RICA ▼

Costa Rica ended up bottom of Group E, but for a moment it looked like they would cause a major tournament upset by defeating Germany in the final game and going through along with Japan – knocking out Spain as a result. Ultimately, their lead lasted just a few minutes, but they were certainly part of the final-day drama that was seen across the group stage. Indeed, they were the only team to defeat Group E winners Japan within 90 minutes.

Upset... Keysher Fuller celebrates scoring v Japan

BELGIUM ▼

A win by a single goal against the run of play versus Canada in the opening game gave Belgium false hope. They were lucky to win that opener, before a defeat to Morocco and a dull draw with Croatia in their must-win final match demonstrated the decline of this team. Even star midfield playmaker Kevin De Bruyne couldn't drag them to the knockout stages. Coach Roberto Martinez stepped down immediately after the draw with Croatia, an indication of how disappointing an ageing Red Devils side were in Qatar.



End of an era...Kevin De Bruyne

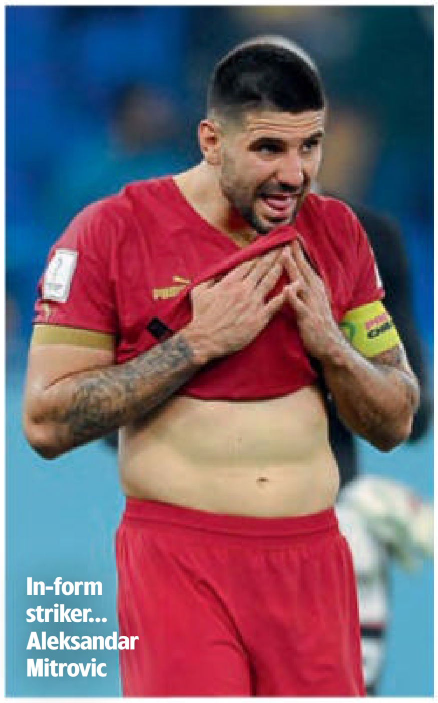
History maker... Alphonso Davies celebrates scoring Canada's first-ever World Cup goal

◀ CANADA

After an almost perfect display in CONCACAF qualifying, topping the group ahead of the United States and Mexico, Canada's experience at the World Cup finals themselves was effectively the opposite. The game in which they did play well, against Belgium, they lost, before they were torn apart by Croatia and slumped to defeat against Morocco. Alphonso Davies fittingly scored his country's first-ever World Cup goal, and the young team will now be looking ahead to co-hosting the tournament in 2026. This current group will still be disappointed with this showing.

SERBIA ▼

Serbia were top goalscorers in Group G but still finished bottom of the pile. In Fulham's Aleksandar Mitrovic they had an in-form striker, with eight goals in his last seven games for his country, including two at this World Cup. They even managed to score twice in their all-important final game against Switzerland, but conceded three, making it eight goals against in total. Despite the defeat to Brazil in the opening game, Dragan Stojkovic's side should have had enough in the remaining games to go through, but their defence let them down.


In-form striker... Aleksandar Mitrovic

Memorable moment...Vincent Aboubakar scores against Brazil

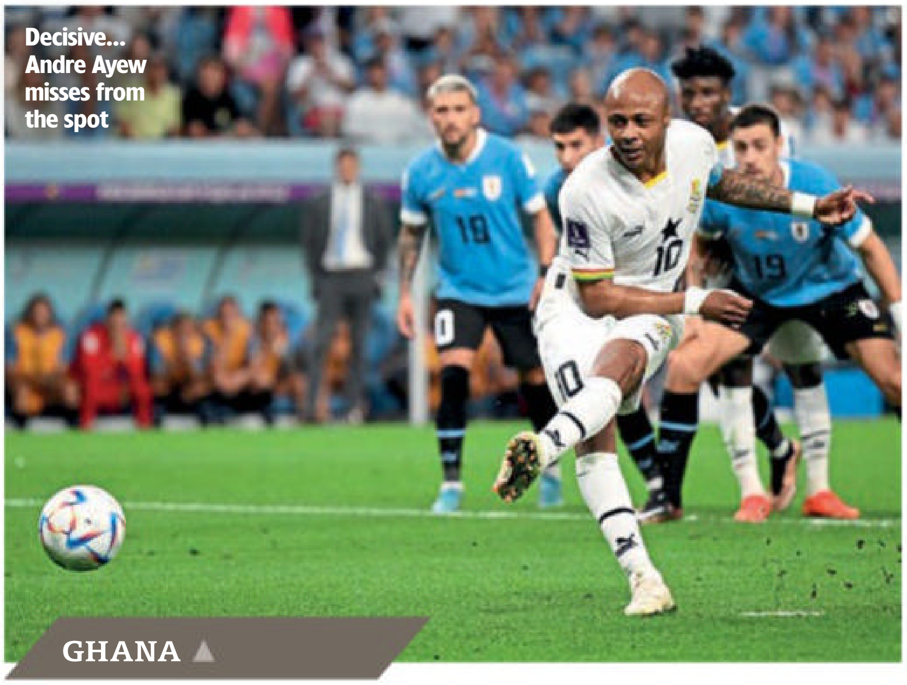
CAMEROON ▲

Led by striker Vincent Aboubakar, the Indomitable Lions recorded their first win at a World Cup finals since 2002. They qualified in 2010 and 2014, but lost all six group games across those two tournaments. Despite an exit at the same stage here, Aboubakar, having finished top scorer at the AFCON earlier in the year, made it a tournament to remember. He scored a Karel Poborsky-esque lob against Serbia, before netting a late winner in a 1-0 win against Brazil in their final game, getting sent off after receiving a second yellow for removing his shirt during joyous celebrations.

URUGUAY ▼

Luis Suarez couldn't hide his tears in the dugout as Uruguay crashed out in the group stage of what will likely be the legendary striker's last World Cup. Diego Alonso's side won their final game – a grudge match against Ghana – leaving them with a chance of second spot, but they eventually went out on goals scored after South Korea defeated Portugal. One goal would've been enough in the final moments, but by that time attackers Suarez, Darwin Nunez, Facundo Pellistri and Giorgian de Arrascaeta – who was on a hat-trick – had been subbed off by Alonso.

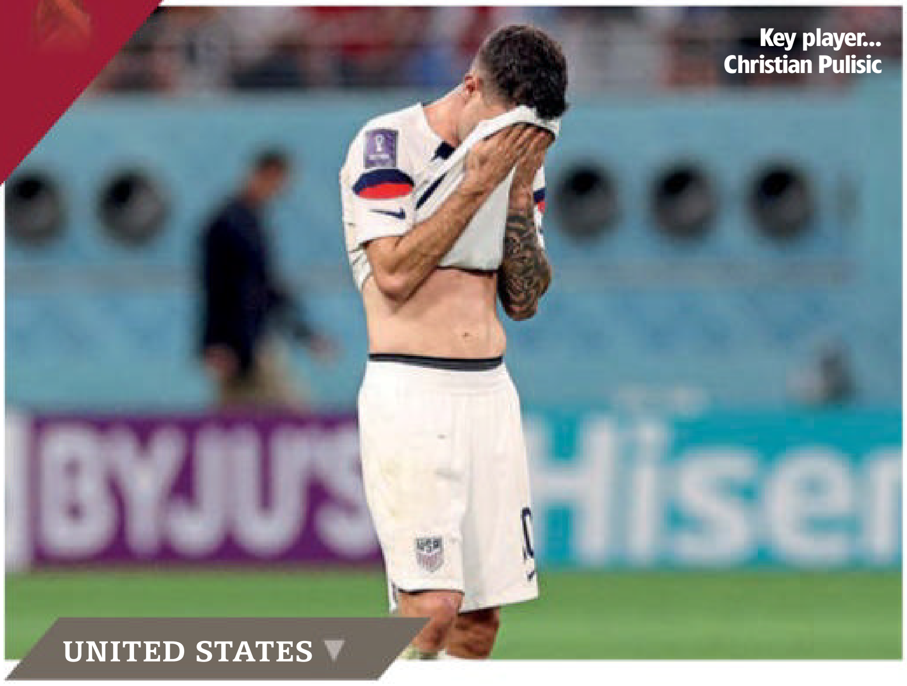
Tearful... Luis Suarez


Decisive... Andre Ayew misses from the spot

GHANA ▲

Five group-stage goals, which came in exciting clashes against Portugal and South Korea – were not enough to see Ghana reach the knockout stages. Their final game against Uruguay was built up as a revenge mission for their quarter-final exit to the same side at the 2010 World Cup. When Andre Ayew missed a penalty it looked like the heartbreak would be repeated. But Ghana got a revenge of sorts as Uruguay also failed to progress, and pictures of Suarez crying on the touchline were beamed around the world.

TEAM BY TEAM *round-of-16 exit*



Key player... Christian Pulisic

UNITED STATES

One of the youngest squads at the tournament came unstuck against the wily Dutch. A bright, sprightly midfield of Tyler Adams, Weston McKennie and Yunus Musah had drawn plaudits in the group stage, but they looked out of gas by their fourth game. They were the only team to stifle England in Group B, where Christian Pulisic scored an important goal against Iran to help reaffirm his status as his country's key player. This young group will look forward to the next World Cup on home turf but – just like one of their 2026 co-hosts, Canada – they would have liked to have gone further in Qatar.

AUSTRALIA

Mathew Leckie's winning goal against Denmark in Australia's final group game will go down in Socceroos history. Their reward for reaching the knockout stages was a meeting with Lionel Messi's Argentina, during which they went a couple of goals down but made more of a game of it than many expected, and even had Argentina worried when they pulled a goal back and had a couple of good chances late on. Incidentally, the last time they reached the last 16, in Germany in 2006, they also lost to the eventual champions, Italy.

Elation... Leckie after scoring against Denmark

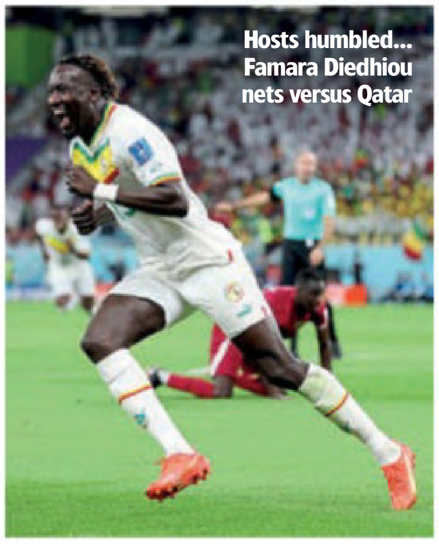
POLAND

The great Polish striker Robert Lewandowski finally added a World Cup goal to his long list of achievements as his country reached the last 16 for the first time since 1986. They never looked like progressing further given they had to face in-form France, against whom they suffered a 3-1 defeat. At least Lewandowski was able to net a knockout-stage goal to go with his strike against Saudi Arabia in the group phase.

Wait over...Lewy celebrates scoring against Saudi Arabia

SENEGAL

The African champions were dealt a massive blow shortly before the tournament with the news that star man Sadio Mane would not be fit enough to take part due to a knee injury. They lost their opener against the Netherlands but managed to defeat Qatar and Ecuador to qualify from their group. Despite missing Mane, the Lions of Teranga had hopes of an upset going into their last-16 tie against England, but were ultimately unable to stop the Three Lions and lost 3-0.



Hosts humbled... Famara Diedhiou nets versus Qatar

JAPAN

Samurai Blue were one of the most popular teams of the early stages after topping a group containing both Germany and Spain. A win against the former in their opening match helped them on their way, before they went on to defeat the latter in the final group game. Freiburg's Ritsu Doan came off the bench to score in both victories. In the next stage, Japan managed to take the lead against Croatia, before conceding an equaliser to Ivan Perisic. The subsequent penalty shootout was the opposite of their previous performances, lacking real conviction as they converted just one spot-kick.

Controversy...Kaoru Mitoma sets up Japan's winner v Spain

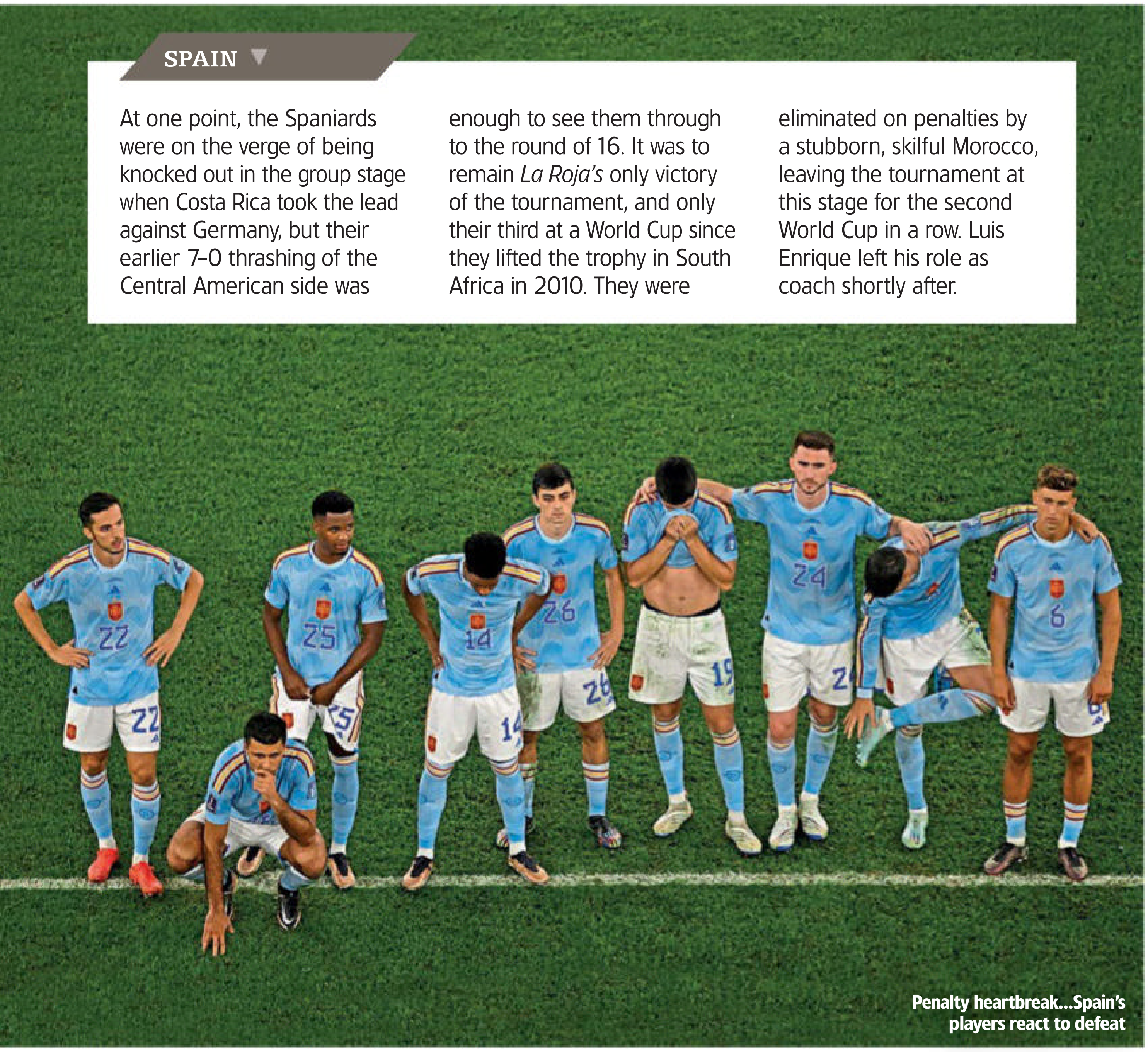
Celebrations... South Korea after securing knockout-stage qualification

SOUTH KOREA

The South Korean players huddled together on the pitch following their 2–1 victory over Portugal in their final game of Group H, waiting to learn whether Uruguay had scored another goal against Ghana which would have knocked them out. It felt like a long wait but the scenes of celebration once the Uruguay game finished was one of the moments of the World Cup. They were brought back down to earth by Brazil in the knockouts, naively losing 4–1, but few teams would have been able to handle the *Selecao* on that day in Doha.

SPAIN

At one point, the Spaniards were on the verge of being knocked out in the group stage when Costa Rica took the lead against Germany, but their earlier 7–0 thrashing of the Central American side was enough to see them through to the round of 16. It was to remain *La Roja's* only victory of the tournament, and only their third at a World Cup since they lifted the trophy in South Africa in 2010. They were eliminated on penalties by a stubborn, skilful Morocco, leaving the tournament at this stage for the second World Cup in a row. Luis Enrique left his role as coach shortly after.



Penalty heartbreak...Spain's players react to defeat

SWITZERLAND

Historic... Embolo

Breel Embolo scored two of Switzerland's four group-stage goals, including the winner in the ultimately crucial victory against Cameroon. In doing so, the Monaco striker became the first player to score against the country of his birth at a World Cup. Led by familiar faces Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri, many tipped the Swiss to cause an upset against Portugal, but they were resoundingly beaten 6–1.

TEAM BY TEAM *quarter-final exit*

Heartbroken... Neymar can't hold back the tears after defeat to Croatia

BRAZIL

Even defeat in the final group game against Cameroon didn't dampen enthusiasm around this Brazil side. A 4-1 thrashing of South Korea in the round of 16 reinforced the idea that Tite's team could turn on the style when they wanted, and a brilliant Neymar goal in the quarter-final felt like a significant moment for the star player and his nation. But it was to be their last, as the spirited, talented Croatia took the game to a penalty shootout and won. It will feel disastrous now, but an exciting young group provides massive encouragement for the future.

NETHERLANDS

Cody Gakpo's headline goals – three in three group games – opened up the real possibility of a fitting send-off for coach Louis van Gaal. After outmanoeuvring the United States in the last 16 they came up against Argentina, or rather Leo Messi, who assisted one and scored another. Just as it looked like they were out, sub Wout Weghorst equalised after a clever, bold free-kick from Teun Koopmeiners to take the game to extra-time and then penalties. Van Gaal's side lost the ensuing shootout but played their part in one of the most memorable and feisty games at this World Cup.

Last World Cup... Louis van Gaal

ENGLAND

The Three Lions were one of the outstanding teams in the group stage along with France, and when they faced each other in the quarter-finals the game itself felt like a final. Gareth Southgate's side had cruised through the tournament to that point, scoring 12 goals in four games. They convinced against Senegal in the round of 16 and impressed against France, but didn't quite do enough. Harry Kane missed a penalty that would have levelled things up – having scored one under huge pressure earlier – but ultimately they didn't create enough in open play.

Decisive...Harry Kane watches his late penalty sail over the bar against France

PORTUGAL

After dismantling Switzerland in the most convincing fashion in the first knockout round, Fernando Santos' side looked like genuine contenders. Amid an inevitable Cristiano Ronaldo sideshow, 21-year-old Goncalo Ramos announced himself at the World Cup with a hat-trick, and Bruno Fernandes gave a reminder of how good he can be. There were echoes of Brazil in some of their play but, like Tite's side, they came unstuck against an underdog as Youssef En-Nesyri's goal for Morocco sent them home.

Dejected... Ronaldo and Pepe react to a missed chance

FOURTH PLACE: MOROCCO

It was one of the most notable runs in World Cup history. The Atlas Lions exited Qatar in style after taking the game to France despite not finding the moment needed in attack. This team, the first from Africa to make it all the way to the semi-finals, were always interesting, even when their job required them to defend. Sofyan Amrabat and Azzedine Ounahi were the engine room, but it was a collective triumph that included warriors in defence like Romain Saiss; players capable of magic, in the form of Hakim Ziyech and Sofiane Boufal; and a legion of supporters that rapidly increased as Morocco progressed.

THIRD PLACE: CROATIA

Luka Modric bowed out of his last World Cup at the top of his game. At least the evidence in Qatar suggested as much, as he mixed it on the biggest stage with the best players to help his team finish third. This resolute group, epitomised by the defending from 20-year-old Josko Gvardiol, won two penalty shootouts against Japan and favourites Brazil, before Gvardiol succumbed to Messi, and Croatia themselves to Argentina.

RUNNERS-UP: FRANCE

If Argentina were all about Messi, then France were all about eight-goal Golden Boot-winning forward Kylian Mbappe, whose explosive skill and prowess from the left petrified defences all tournament. Didier Deschamps' occasionally stodgy team were also lifted by the performances of attacking midfielder Antoine Griezmann and Olivier Giroud's strength and craft up front. It was the first time the defending champions had reached the final since Brazil did so in 1998 – an impressive feat considering the number of injury setbacks *Les Bleus* suffered prior to the tournament – and there is no shame in finally losing to Messi's Argentina.

WINNERS: ARGENTINA

This was Lionel Messi's World Cup to win or lose. Or so the narrative went. The details show he had some help. In turn, Messi helped others reach their own potential, such as lively forward Julian Alvarez and midfield revelation Enzo Fernandez. An opening-game defeat to Saudi Arabia was to be the only game Lionel Scaloni's team lost. It eradicated complacency and served as a reminder that a World Cup can be as much a struggle as a parade, even if you have arguably the greatest player of all time. For many, a World Cup win at last now confirms that title for Messi.

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FINAL

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 3PM

ARGENTINA (2) 3
(Messi 23 pen, 108, Di Maria 36)

FRANCE (0) 3
(Mbappe 80 pen, 81, 118 pen)

After Extra-Time; 2-2 at 90 mins; Argentina win 4-2 on penalties

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail Att: 88,966 Ref: Marciniak (Pol)

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Molina (Montiel 91), Romero, Otamendi, Tagliafico (Dybala 120+1); De Paul (Paredes 102), Fernandez, Mac Allister (Pezzella 116); Messi, Alvarez (La. Martinez 102), Di Maria (Acuna 64).
🟨 Fernandez, Acuna, Paredes, Montiel, E. Martinez

FRANCE Lloris; Kounde (Disasi 120+1), Varane (Konate 113), Upamecano, T. Hernandez (Camavinga 71); Tchouameni, Rabiot (Fofana 96); Dembele (Kolo Muani 41), Griezmann (Coman 71), Mbappe; Giroud (Thuram 41).
🟨 Rabiot, Thuram, Giroud

GOALS

1-0 Ousmane Dembele effects a clumsy challenge on Angel Di Maria. Though minimal contact appears to be made, the referee points to the spot. Lionel Messi calmly sends Hugo Lloris the wrong way with the penalty.

2-0 Messi flicks the ball to Julian Alvarez on the right wing, who, in turn, releases Alexis Mac Allister. The Brighton man delivers the perfect low cross, which Di Maria ruthlessly fires in past Lloris.

2-1 Randal Kolo Muani bustles past a pedestrian Nicolas Otamendi on the left side. In a vain attempt to make amends, Otamendi brings down the French substitute. Kylian Mbappe converts the penalty.

2-2 Kingsley Coman picks the pocket of Messi out on the right. The ball goes cross-pitch, where Mbappe heads down a one-two with sub Marcus Thuram before sensationally volleying home.

3-2 Following neat Argentine interplay in the inside-right channel, Messi plays in Lautaro Martinez, who shoots powerfully from the tightest of angles. Lloris can only parry and Messi bundles the ball over the line.

3-3 A French corner is partially cleared. Mbappe goes for goal with a powerful shot, only for Gonzalo Montiel to block with his forearm. Mbappe completes his hat-trick from the penalty spot.

Number two...Angel Di Maria beats Lloris

PENALTIES (France first)

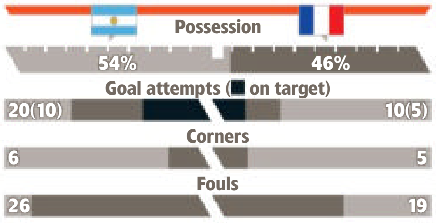
Messi	1-1	0-1	Mbappe
Dybala	2-1	1-1	Coman
Paredes	3-1	2-1	Tchouameni
Montiel	4-2	3-2	Kolo Muani

A BREATHTAKING FINALE

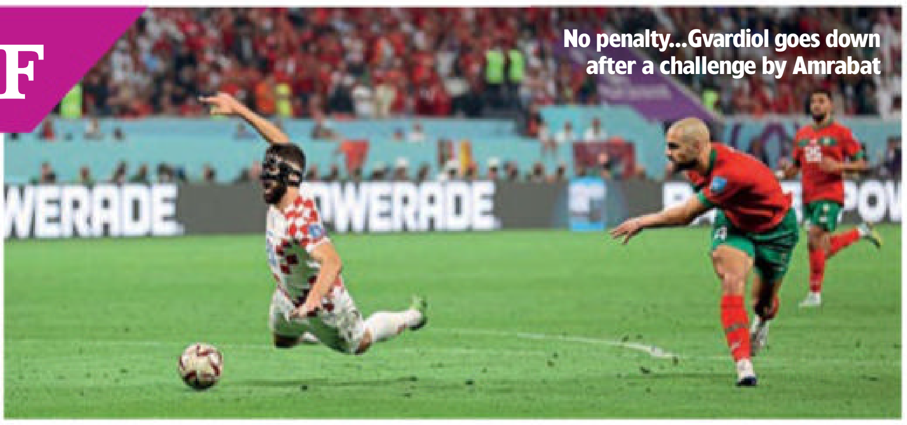
In a totally fitting apotheosis to a wonderful career, Lionel Messi was once more Argentina's inspiration, opening the scoring, netting again in extra-time and coolly doing his thing in his side's victorious shootout. No back-to-back world titles for *Les Bleus*. But what a part they played in this showpiece for the ages, twice hauling themselves off the canvas to even the score. Poor Kylian Mbappe. A hat-trick – the first in a World Cup final since England's Geoff Hurst gained immortality in 1966 – and still on the losing side. Wavering French nerves were the crucial factor in the shootout, with Kingsley Coman having his effort saved by Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and Aurelien Tchouameni missing the target altogether. A moment of magical destiny for the iconic Messi, who, at the grand old age of 35, finally has the World Cup his extraordinary talent deserves.

MATTER OF FACT

Kylian Mbappe's Golden Boot-winning haul of eight goals was the best goalscoring effort at a World Cup since 2002, when Brazil's Ronaldo also managed eight.



THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF


No penalty...Gvardiol goes down after a challenge by Amrabat

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 3PM

CROATIA (2) 2
(Gvardiol 7, Orsic 42)

MOROCCO (1) 1
(Dari 9)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan Att: 44,137 Ref: Al Jassim (Qat)

CROATIA Livakovic; Stanisic, Sutalo, Gvardiol, Perisic; Modric, Kovacic; Majer (Pasalic 66), Kramaric (Vlasic 61), Orsic (Jakic 90+5); Livaja (Petkovic 66).

MOROCCO Bounou; Hakimi, El Yamiq (Amallah 67), Dari (Benoun 64), Attiat Allah; El Khannouss (Ounahi 56), Amrabat, Sabiri (Chair 46); Ziyech, En-Nesyri, Boufal (Zaroury 64).
🟨 Ounahi, Amallah

GOALS

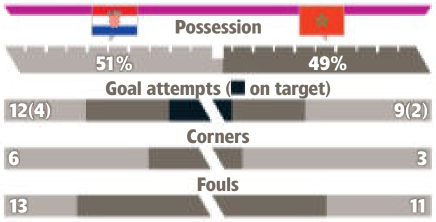
1-0 Lovro Majer floats a free-kick into the box for Ivan Perisic, who twists in mid-air to head it back for Josko Gvardiol to score with an emphatic diving header.

1-1 Hakim Ziyech's inswinging free-kick flicks off the top of Majer's head. While Croatia doze, Achraf Dari heads in from close range.

2-1 Morocco lose the ball and Marko Livaja lays it off to Mislav Orsic, whose sublime curling effort ends up in the net via the far post.

NO DEAD RUBBER HERE

Both sides gave everything in their quest for bronze and such was the Moroccan disappointment that they angrily surrounded the referee on the final whistle. Croatia just shaded it in terms of individual quality and team effectiveness, and arguably should have had a penalty late on when Sofyan Amrabat brought down Gvardiol.



SEMI-FINALS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 7PM

ARGENTINA (1) 3
(Messi 34 pen, Alvarez 39, 69)
CROATIA (0) 0

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail Att: 88,966 Ref: Orsato (Ita)

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Molina (Foyth 86), Romero, Otamendi, Tagliafico; De Paul (Palacios 74), Paredes (Li. Martinez 62), Fernandez, Mac Allister (Correa 86); Messi, Alvarez (Dybala 74).
🟨 Romero, Otamendi

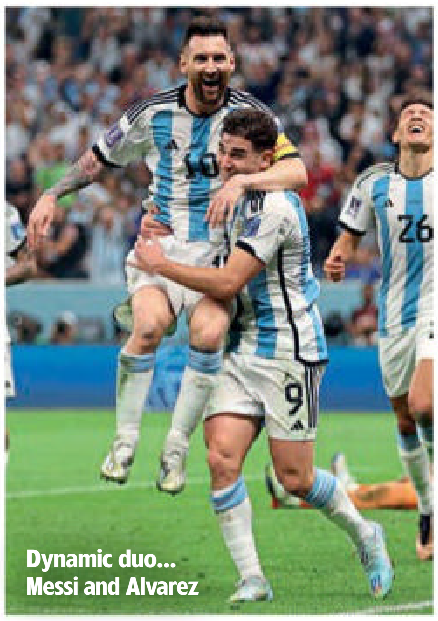
CROATIA Livakovic; Juranovic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Sosa (Orsic 46); Modric (Majer 81), Brozovic (Petkovic 50), Kovacic; Pasalic (Vlasic 46), Kramaric (Livaja 72), Perisic.
🟨 Livakovic, Kovacic

GOALS

1-0 Enzo Fernandez puts Julian Alvarez clean through. Alvarez flicks the ball past Croatia keeper Dominik Livakovic, who bodychecks the Argentine forward. Lionel Messi steps up and lashes the penalty home with real conviction.

2-0 Alvarez goes on a slaloming solo run from the half-way line. Aided by convenient bounces off Josip Juranovic and Borna Sosa, he then pokes it past Livakovic.

3-0 On the ball along the right flank, Messi mesmerises Croatia centre-back Josko Gvardiol with unerring close control and clever, subtle changes of pace, before cutting it back for Alvarez who simply cannot miss.



Dynamic duo... Messi and Alvarez

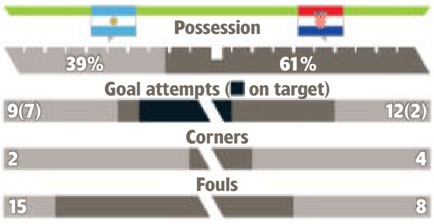
ARGENTINE ATTACKING DUO TOO HOT TO HANDLE

With Leo Messi and Julian Alvarez in sparkling form, backed by an energised, totally committed supporting cast of team-mates, Argentina simply could not be denied, sweeping majestically to their sixth World Cup final. Croatia, an overachieving crew who never know when they are beaten, have made a habit in recent times of escapology acts. But not this time. Up against a Messi-inspired Argentina, a team driven by an almost manic desire, the Croats suddenly found themselves in a new hostile environment, one where plucky resistance and opportunism are just not enough. To their credit, Croatia started well, catching the eye with their care in possession and delightful passing triangles. Not once, however, did they threaten the Argentine rearguard. In marked contrast, Argentina had both the God-given creative genius of Messi – who at one point seemed to be struggling with a hamstring injury – and a young-gun attacking predator in Alvarez. Normally Croatia's defence, protected by Marcelo Brozovic, is as watertight as they come, but it says everything about the brilliance of Messi and Alvarez that they rendered the Croatian rearguard more sieve than citadel.

"Sometimes they [Croatia] are out of shape when they lose the ball and leave a lot of space"
Argentina captain Lionel Messi

MATTER OF FACT

Lionel Messi's penalty saw him score his 11th World Cup goal, helping him overtake Gabriel Batistuta as Argentina's all-time top scorer at World Cup finals.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 7PM

FRANCE (1) 2
(T. Hernandez 5, Kolo Muani 79)
MOROCCO (0) 0

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor Att: 68,294 Ref: Ramos (Mex)

FRANCE Lloris; Kounde, Varane, Konate, T. Hernandez; Tchouameni, Fofana; Dembele (Kolo Muani 78), Griezmann, Mbappe; Giroud (Thuram 65).

MOROCCO Bounou; Hakimi, Dari, Saiss (Amallah 21, Ezzalzouli 78), El Yamiq, Mazraoui (Attiat Allah 46); Ziyech, Ounahi, Amrabat, Boufal (Aboukhlal 67); En-Nesyri (Hamdallah 66).
🟨 Boufal

GOALS

1-0 Raphael Varane puts Antoine Griezmann away on the right. The latter's cross finds Kylian Mbappe, who twice has goal attempts blocked. The ball spins to the far post, where Theo Hernandez acrobatically hooks in.

2-0 Marcus Thuram and Mbappe combine on the left side of the box. Five Moroccans struggle to contain the latter, whose shot ricochets across the area to hand Randal Kolo Muani an unmissable chance.

Club mates battle... Mbappe v Hakimi

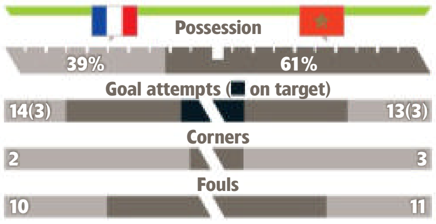
FRANCE END MOROCCAN DREAM

Inhabitual goalscorers performed the honours as reigning champions France reached consecutive World Cup finals; raiding left-back Theo Hernandez netting only his second national team goal and Randal Kolo Muani scoring with his first touch after coming on as a substitute. For a World Cup semi-final, this was a surprisingly open encounter, with both sides squandering good opportunities and huge underdogs Morocco asking questions aplenty of the French. After conceding early, the Atlas Lions could easily have become disheartened. But showing the same strength of character they have displayed all tournament, recovered excellently from the setback, growing into the game and particularly close to an equaliser when Jawad El Yamiq hit the post with a superb overhead kick on the stroke of half-time. *Les Bleus*, though, always had that extra attacking gear and duly used it in the later stages.

"I don't really want to answer that question"
France coach Didier Deschamps responds to rumours that Karim Benzema could return to the squad for the World Cup final

MATTER OF FACT

No.12 Randal Kolo Muani's goal ensured a quirky piece of World Cup trivia, with every shirt number represented on the scoresheet at Qatar 2022 – including own goals.



QUARTER-FINALS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 3PM

CROATIA (0) 1
(Petkovic 117)

BRAZIL (0) 1
(Neymar 105)

After Extra-Time; 0-0 at 90 mins; Croatia win 4-2 on penalties
Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan Att: 43,893 Ref: Oliver (Eng)

Last-gasp equaliser ...Croatia's saviour Bruno Petkovic

CROATIA Livakovic; Juranovic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Sosa (Budimir 110); Modric, Brozovic (Orsic 114), Kovacic (Majer 105); Pasalic (Vlasic 72), Kramaric (Petkovic 72), Perisic.
🟨 Brozovic, Petkovic

BRAZIL Alisson; Militao (Alex Sandro 105), Marquinhos, Thiago Silva, Danilo; Paqueta (Fred 105), Casemiro; Raphinha (Antony 56), Neymar, Vinicius Junior (Rodrygo 64); Richarlison (Pedro 84).
🟨 Danilo, Casemiro, Marquinhos

GOALS

0-1 Neymar plays one-twos with Rodrygo and Lucas Paqueta before rounding Croatia keeper Dominik Livakovic and scooping the ball into the roof of the net.

1-1 Luka Modric finds Mislav Orsic in space on the left, and the latter crosses low for sub Bruno Petkovic to score with a deflected right-foot shot.

PENALTIES (Croatia first)

Croatia			Brazil
Vlasic	1-0	1-0	Rodrygo
Majer	2-0	2-1	Casemiro
Modric	3-1	3-2	Pedro
Orsic	4-2	4-2	Marquinhos

BRAZIL'S WC DREAM OVER

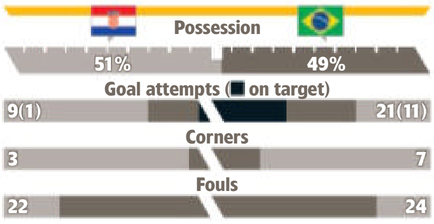
Togetherness, grit and a never-say-die spirit can take a team far at a World Cup. Just ask Croatia, who displayed such qualities in abundance in their elimination of the hot tournament favourites.

Croatia have now won four penalty shootouts out of four in the last two World Cups and were once again exemplary tie-breakers, scoring all four of their kicks and seeing Dominik Livakovic save Brazil's first kick from Rodrygo. The balance of power seemed to be swinging Brazil's way when Neymar gave them the lead late in the first period of extra-time. But warriors to the core, Zlatko Dalic's team never lost the faith, finding the energy and inspiration to come up with a late leveller. Despite forcing several point-blank saves out of Livakovic, Brazil should have been a lot sharper in attack. They were poor out wide and centre-forward Richarlison clearly was not fully fit.

> **"A painful defeat but I'm at peace with myself. It's the end of my cycle"**
> *Brazil coach Tite quits his post*

MATTER OF FACT

Neymar took his international goal tally to 77, equalling Pele's all-time scoring record for Brazil.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 7PM

NETHERLANDS (0) 2
(Weghorst 83, 90+11)

ARGENTINA (1) 2
(Molina 35, Messi 73 pen)

After Extra-Time; 2-2 at 90 mins; Argentina win 4-3 on penalties
Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail Att: 88,235 Ref: Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

NETHERLANDS Noppert; Dumfries, Timber, Van Dijk, Ake, Blind (L. De Jong 65); De Roon (Koopmeiners 46), F. De Jong, Gakpo (Lang 113); Bergwijn (Berghuis 46), Depay (Weghorst 78).
🟨 Timber, Weghorst, Depay, Berghuis, Bergwijn, Dumfries, Lang 🟥 Dumfries

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Molina (Montiel 105), Romero (Pezzella 78), Otamendi, Li. Martinez (Di Maria 112), Acuna (Tagliafico 78); De Paul (Paredes 66) Fernandez, Mac Allister; Messi, Alvarez (La. Martinez 82).
🟨 Acuna, Romero, Li. Martinez, Paredes, Messi, Otamendi, Montiel, Pezzella

GOALS

0-1 Without looking up, Lionel Messi threads a ball through the eye of a needle with a sublime pass to Nahuel Molina, who controls it with his left foot and prods in with his right.

0-2 Argentina are awarded a penalty when Denzel Dumfries hangs a lazy leg, bringing down Marcos Acuna. Messi converts.

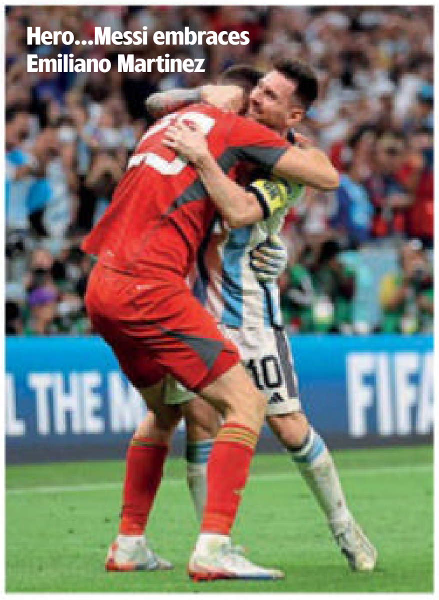
1-2 Steven Berghuis puts in an inswinging cross from the right, and towering sub Wout Weghorst finds the net with a flicked header.

2-2 Nicolas Otamendi concedes a needless free-kick on the edge of the box. Rather than shooting, sub Teun Koopmeiners ingeniously rolls a low pass to Weghorst, who swivels and dramatially scores with the last kick of regulation time.

PENALTIES (Netherlands first)

Netherlands			Argentina
Van Dijk	0-0	0-1	Messi
Berghuis	0-1	0-2	Paredes
Koopmeiners	1-2	1-3	Montiel
Weghorst	2-3	2-3	Fernandez
L. De Jong	3-3	3-4	La. Martinez

ARGENTINA PREVAIL IN BAD-TEMPERED CONTEST


Hero...Messi embraces Emiliano Martinez

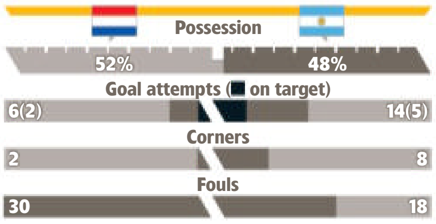
Lionel Messi's dreams of World Cup glory remained alive, but he and his Argentinian team-mates came close to throwing it all away in this dramatic encounter of contrasting styles, with unexpected twists and no little bad blood. At 2-0 up with ten minutes left to play, Argentina appeared to be cruising to the semis, only to suddenly panic when the Dutch went route one to big-unit substitute strikers Wout Weghorst and Luuk de Jong. In the penalty shootout Argentina keeper Emiliano Martinez, a specialist in spot-kick mind games, proved the hero, saving the *Oranje's* first two attempts from Virgil van Dijk and Steven Berghuis, before Lautaro Martinez coolly sealed matters.

> **"Van Gaal says that Holland play good football but what he did was put on tall people and hit long balls"**
> *Argentina captain Lionel Messi*

MATTER OF FACT

This match saw 18 yellow cards, including two for Denzel Dumfries and cautions for Argentina coaches Lionel Scaloni and Walter Samuel.

Flashpoint... tempers flare



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 3PM

MOROCCO (1) 1
(En-Nesyri 42)

PORTUGAL (0) 0

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha Att: 44,198 Ref: Tello (Arg)

MOROCCO Bounou; Hakimi, Al Yamiq, Saiss (Dari 57), Attiat Allah; Ounahi, Amrabat, Amallah (Cheddira 65); Ziyech (Aboukhlal 82), En-Nesyri (Benoun 65), Boufal (Jabrane 82).
🟨 Dari, Cheddira 🟥 Cheddira

PORTUGAL Costa; Dalot (Horta 79), Pepe, Dias, Guerreiro (Cancelo 51); Bernardo Silva, Neves (Ronaldo 51), Otavio (Vitinha 69); Fernandes, Ramos (Leao 69), Joao Felix.
🟨 Vitinha

GOALS

1-0 Morocco left-back Yahia Attiat Allah puts a looping cross into the box. Portugal keeper Diogo Costa hesitates, and when he tries to claim it he is comprehensively outjumped by Youssef En-Nesyri, who glances it into the net.

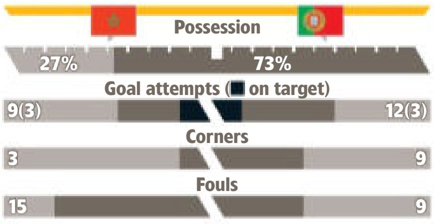
MOROCCO MAKE HISTORY

The Moroccan fairy tale continues. Full of heart, belief and industry, the Atlas Lions saw off the much-fancied Portuguese to claim a dream spot in the last four, the first time an African nation has gone so far at a World Cup. The Moroccan gameplan could not have worked out any better. Getting their noses in front after Portugal's usually reliable keeper Diogo Costa made a hash of a cross; then sitting deep and putting on a masterclass of defensive organisation and "they shall not pass" stubbornness. Not bad for a unit which was severely depleted by injuries, with Noussair Mazraoui and Nayef Aguerd unable to start and skipper Romain Saiss forced to leave the battle on 57 minutes. Portugal, who brought on Cristiano Ronaldo early in the second half in a vain attempt to redress the situation, simply could not break the defiant Moroccans down. The Portuguese twice came close to unlocking the fortress door, Bruno Fernandes striking the bar just a minute after the North Africans took the lead and Lions keeper Yassine Bounou brilliantly tipping over a late Joao Felix effort.

> **"Some find it hard to believe that Africans can pose tactical problems to the bigger nations. We are working on it and progressing"**
> *Morocco coach Walid Regragui*

MATTER OF FACT

Substitute Cristiano Ronaldo won his 196th Portugal cap, equalling FIFA's record as the most-capped male footballer of all time.



Super save...Yassine Bounou wonderfully tips over Joao Felix's sublime late effort

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 7PM

ENGLAND (0) 1
(Kane 54 pen)

FRANCE (1) 2
(Tchouameni 17, Giroud 78)

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor Att: 68,895 Ref: Sampaio (Bra)

ENGLAND Pickford; Walker, Stones (Grealish 90+8), Maguire, Shaw; Henderson (Mount 79), Rice, Bellingham; Saka (Sterling 79), Kane, Foden (Rashford 85).
🟨 Maguire

FRANCE Lloris; Kounde, Varane, Upamecano, T. Hernandez; Tchouameni, Rabiot; Dembele (Coman 79), Griezmann, Mbappe; Giroud.
🟨 Griezmann, Dembele, T. Hernandez

GOALS

0-1 Antoine Griezmann squares it to Aurelien Tchouameni, who lets fly with a well-struck drive from 25 yards out. The shot goes through the legs of Jude Bellingham and England keeper Jordan Pickford, at full stretch, is left helpless.

1-1 Tchouameni rashly brings down the wandering Bukayo Saka in the box, and Harry Kane sends club mate Hugo Lloris the wrong way from the penalty spot.

1-2 Griezmann whips in a thing of beauty cross from the left flank. Olivier Giroud sneaks ahead of his marker Harry Maguire to head emphatically home.

HOLDERS EDGE OUT ENGLAND

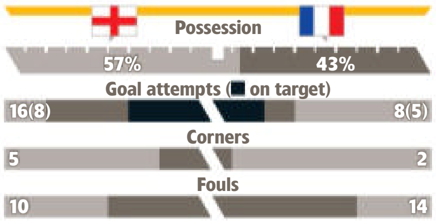
Gallic realism proved the decisive factor in this battle of the Cross-Channel giants. While the ever-enterprising Three Lions dominated proceedings for long periods, it was the French who owned the key moments of the game, with keeper Hugo Lloris in indomitable form, Antoine Griezmann skilfully pulling the creative strings and the evergreen Olivier Giroud heading in the winner with the dead-eye ruthlessness of an assassin. *Les Bleus* could even afford mercurial star man Kylian Mbappe to be kept relatively quiet and to gift the opposition two penalties with reckless challenges. England, by way of contrast, could not quite complete the job. If only Harry Kane had not skied his second penalty of the night six minutes from time. Fine margins indeed.

Regret...Harry Kane reacts after missing his penalty

> **"I can't fault my preparation or the detail before the game – it didn't feel any different. I felt confident taking it, but didn't execute it the way I wanted to"**
> *Harry Kane on his penalty miss*

MATTER OF FACT

Once more on the scoresheet for his country, Harry Kane now has 53 international goals for the Three Lions, equalling Wayne Rooney's all-time England record.



ROUND OF 16

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 3PM

NETHERLANDS (2) 3
(Depay 10, Blind 45+1, Dumfries 81)

UNITED STATES (0) 1
(Wright 76)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan Att: 44,846 Ref: Sampaio

Man of the match Denzel Dumfries...a goal and two assists

NETHERLANDS Noppert; Dumfries, Timber, Van Dijk, Ake (De Ligt 90+3), Blind; De Roon (Bergwijn 46), F. De Jong, Klaassen (Koopmeiners 46); Gakpo (Weghorst 90+3), Depay (Simons 83).
🟨 Koopmeiners, F. De Jong

UNITED STATES Turner; Dest (Yedlin 75), Zimmerman, Ream, Robinson (Morris 90+2); Musah, Adams, McKennie (Wright 67); Weah (Aaronson 67), Ferreira (Reyna 46), Pulisic.

GOALS

1-0 The Dutch patiently and precisely construct a sweeping move of 20 passes. The ball is worked to the right flank, where Denzel Dumfries cuts it back for Memphis Depay to thump home.

2-0 In a carbon-copy of his assist for the first goal, Dumfries puts in another daisy-cutter cross, which left-back Daley Blind meets with a firm right-footed finish.

2-1 Christian Pulisic, free on the right, crosses low into the box and, in the most bizarre of finishes, sub Haji Wright somehow manages to send the ball looping into the net.

3-1 Blind crosses to the far post, where Dumfries, as free as a bird, volleys in with his weaker left foot.

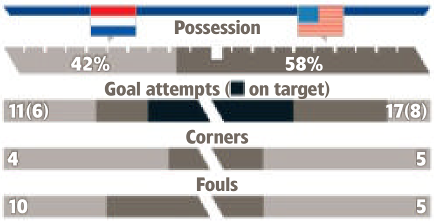
CANNY DUTCH PICK OFF THE US

Oranje boss Louis van Gaal would have felt thoroughly vindicated on the final whistle. Throughout the group phase, many in the Dutch media were quick to slam Van Gaal and his side, accusing them of sloppiness, a lack of fluidity and putting functionality ahead of entertainment value. Here was the *Bondscoach* response, an excellent team performance in which the Netherlands outclassed the United States on the technical front, and controlled both the match rhythm and its emotional temperature. A frustrating encounter all round for the US, who despite having plenty of the ball and creating their share of goalscoring chances – notably an early opportunity which Pulisic wasted – found themselves picked off on the counter by the Dutch.

> **"Yesterday I gave him [Denzel Dumfries] a big kiss on the cheek. I'm going to give him another because he played so well"**
> *Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal*

MATTER OF FACT

The average age of the United States' starting midfield and front line for this game was only 22.



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 7PM

ARGENTINA (1) 2
(Messi 35, Alvarez 57)

AUSTRALIA (0) 1
(Fernandez 77 og)

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan Att: 45,032 Ref: Marciniak (Pol)

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Molina (Palacios 80), Romero, Otamendi, Acuna (Tagliafico 72); De Paul, Fernandez, Mac Allister (Montiel 80); Alvarez (La. Martinez 71), Messi, Gomez (Li. Martinez 50).

AUSTRALIA Ryan; Degenek (Karacic 72), Souttar, Rowles, Behich; Leckie (Kuol 72), Baccus (Hrustic 58), Mooy, McGree (Goodwin 58); Irvine, Duke (Maclaren 72).
🟨 Irvine, Degenek

GOALS

1-0 A Lionel Messi free-kick is only half-cleared. Messi picks up the ball, cuts inside and passes to Alexis Mac Allister on the edge of the penalty box. He feeds Nicolas Otamendi who lays it off for Messi, and he coolly passes it into the bottom corner past Mat Ryan.

Aerial view... Messi shoots

2-0 Following a back-pass by Kye Rowles, Mat Ryan has his pocket picked by a combination of Rodrigo De Paul and Julian Alvarez, and the latter swivels and rolls the ball into the empty net.

2-1 Craig Goodwin seizes on an Otamendi clearance on the left edge of the box and lets fly. The shot takes a huge deflection off Enzo Fernandez, leaving Emiliano Martinez completely flat-footed.

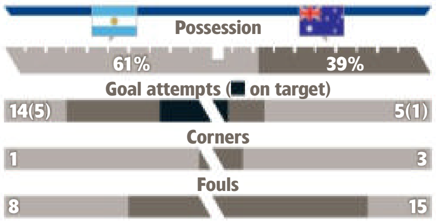
MESSI MASTERCLASS

Try as they might, the brave Socceroos could not bridge the gulf in class and experience. Any opponent of Argentina has to neutralise Lionel Messi, and once again he set the tone for his side's win. Up until his opener, Australia had done well, defending resolutely and impressing in possession too. Once in front, though, Argentina stepped up a gear with Messi continually displaying moments of magic, and early in the second half deservedly extended their lead. To the Aussies' credit, they never stopped battling and in the final quarter of an hour gave the Argentines a scare, pulling a goal back and twice coming within a whisker of an equaliser: Aziz Behich shut down in extremis after a mazy run, and Emi Martinez standing up strong to a point-blank Garang Kuol effort.

> **"My boys were born to take part in this type of encounter. They were made to compete at the very top level"**
> *Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni*

MATTER OF FACT

This was Messi's 1,000th outing as a professional and 100th game as Argentina captain.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 3PM

FRANCE (1) 3
(Giroud 44, Mbappe 74, 90+1)

POLAND (0) 1
(Lewandowski 90+9 pen)

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha Att: 40,989 Ref: Valenzuela (Ven)

Magic Mbappe... brilliant brace

FRANCE Lloris; Kounde (Disasi 90+2), Varane, Upamecano, T. Hernandez; Tchouameni (Fofana 66), Rabiot; Dembele (Coman 76), Griezmann, Mbappe; Giroud (Thuram 76).
🟨 Tchouameni

POLAND Szczesny; Cash, Glik, Kiwior (Bednarek 86), Bereszynski; Krychowiak (Bielik 71); Kaminski (Zalewski 71), Zielinski, S. Szymanski (Milik 64), Frankowski (Grosicki 87); Lewandowski.
🟨 Bereszynski, Cash

GOALS

1-0 Dayot Upamecano passes to Kylian Mbappe in the inside-left channel. The PSG megastar threads a clever through ball to the inexplicably unmarked Olivier Giroud, who delicately finishes.
2-0 Giroud superbly pulls a clearance out of the sky, then passes to Ousmane Dembele who makes forward tracks before picking out Mbappe on the edge of the box. Mbappe then arrows home a venomous right-footer.
3-0 French sub Marcus Thuram serves Mbappe in the box, and "King Kylian" curls an unstoppable effort into the top far corner.
3-1 Poland are awarded a penalty when Kamil Grosicki's cross hits the arm of Dayot Upamecano. Hugo Lloris saves Robert Lewandowski's spot-kick, only for a retake to be ordered. Lewandowski, again with a stuttering run-up, makes no mistake second time around.

LES BLEUS SEE OFF POLAND

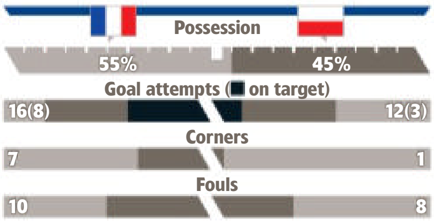
Poland must have known it was not to be their day when, on 38 minutes, they spurned three great chances in rapid succession, Piotr Zielinski twice having shots blocked by Hugo Lloris and Theo Hernandez, before Raphael Varane cleared a Jakub Kaminski effort off the line. Mediocre in most departments in the first half, France cut an altogether different team after the restart, playing at a much higher tempo. Poland, whose star man and goalscoring extraordinaire Robert Lewandowski was well shackled by the Gallic back line, simply had no answer to the problems posed by *Les Bleus*: their attacking accelerations, Olivier Giroud's line-leading qualities and, above all, the extra-terrestrial work of the mercurial Kylian Mbappe.

> **"Whether it be physically or mentally, I've built my whole season on this competition"**
> *France forward Kylian Mbappe*

MATTER OF FACT

Olivier Giroud became France's all-time leading marksman with 52 goals, taking over from *Les Bleus* legend Thierry Henry.

Record scorer... Giroud



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 7PM

ENGLAND (2) 3
(Henderson 39, Kane 45+3, Saka 57)

SENEGAL (0) 0

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor Att: 65,985 Ref: Barton (Slv)

ENGLAND Pickford; Walker, Stones (Dier 77), Maguire, Shaw; Henderson (Phillips 82), Rice, Bellingham (Mount 76); Saka (Rashford 65), Kane, Foden (Grealish 65).

SENEGAL E. Mendy; Sabaly, Koulibaly, Diallo, Jakobs (Ballo-Toure 84); Ciss (P. Gueye 46), N. Mendy; Diatta (P. Sarr 46), Ndiaye (Dieng 46), I. Sarr; Dia (Diedhiou 72).
🟨 Koulibaly

GOALS

1-0 Dropping deep, Harry Kane slips a ball down the left channel for the onrushing Jude Bellingham, who penetrates the Senegalese red zone and executes a pull-back for Jordan Henderson to sweep home.

Number three...Saka's delightfully dinked finish

2-0 After winning possession deep in his own half, Bellingham dynamically advances prior to releasing Phil Foden to his left. The latter immediately switches it back to Harry Kane, who laces it past the hapless Edouard Mendy.
3-0 Foden works some silky magic on the left flank. He leaves two opponents for dead, then delivers a cross to Bukayo Saka who supplies the *coup de grace* with a delicately dinked finish.

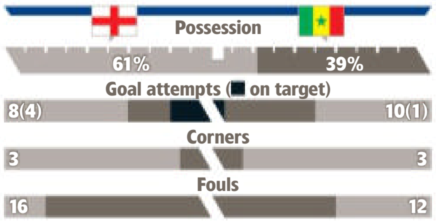
ENGLAND MAKE IT LOOK EASY

Over the course of the 90 minutes, the Three Lions proved far too strong for the current African champions: better equipped defensively, calmer and more composed, and boasting a sharper cutting edge in attack. Not that Gareth Southgate's men were ten out of ten throughout. In the first half-hour, put under a great deal of pressure by an intense Senegal press, they were slow and sloppy and easily could have conceded, especially when striker Boulaye Dia forced a brilliant save out of England keeper Jordan Pickford. Woken from their slumbers by that narrow squeak, England duly took control, with precocious midfield talent Jude Bellingham leading the way with his all-round box-to-box excellence.

> **"It was one of those games when we needed to get the first goal. We knew when we did, we'd be in a good position"**
> *England midfielder Jude Bellingham*

MATTER OF FACT

Three Lions captain Harry Kane took his England goal tally at major international tournaments to 11, overtaking the Three Lions' record set by Gary Lineker.



ROUND OF 16

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 3PM

JAPAN (1) 1
(Maeda 43)

CROATIA (0) 1
(Perisic 55)

After Extra-Time; 1-1 at 90 mins; Croatia win 3-1 on penalties
Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah Att: 42,523 Ref: Elfath (USA)

JAPAN Gonda; Tomiyasu, Yoshida, Taniguchi; J. Ito, Endo, Morita (Tanaka 105), Nagatomo (Mitoma 64); Doan (Minamino 87), Maeda (Asano 64), Kamada (Sakai 75).

CROATIA Livakovic; Juranovic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Barisic; Modric (Majer 99), Brozovic, Kovacic (Vlasic 99); Kramaric (Pasalic 68), Petkovic (Budimir 62, Livaja 105), Perisic (Orsic 106).
🟨 Kovacic, Barisic

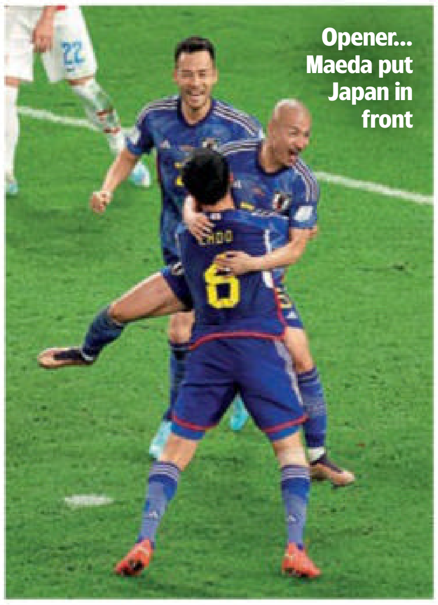
GOALS

1-0 Ritsu Doan whips in a menacing inswinging cross from the right flank. In the packed box Japan centre-back Maya Yoshida gets a touch on the ball, sending it straight to striker Daizen Maeda who rifles it home from six yards.

1-1 Deep from the right wing, Croatia centre-back Dejan Lovren delivers the sort of wicked centre many creative players could not pull off. Japan's marking is not the best, giving Ivan Perisic the opportunity to bury a brilliant header of precision and power.

PENALTIES (Japan first)

Minamino	0-0	0-1	Vlasic
Mitoma	0-1	0-2	Brozovic
Asano	1-2	1-2	Livaja
Yoshida	1-2	1-3	Pasalic



Opener... Maeda put Japan in front

CROATIA SPOT ON AGAIN

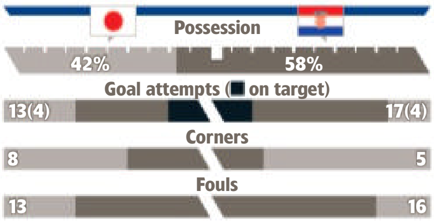
Twice victorious in penalty shootouts at the last World Cup, Croatia once again proved the masters of the tie-breaker exercise. In the clutch, the Croats were far more composed when taking their spot-kicks and, just as crucially, could call on a penalty killer in keeper Dominik Livakovic who saved no fewer than three Japanese kicks from Takumi Minamino, Kaoru Mitoma and skipper Maya Yoshida. Over the 120 minutes of play, there was very little to separate the two combatants, with neither side especially sharp in the final third and clear-cut goalscoring chances few and far between. Croatia had the possession, Japan the busy willpower. Both goalkeepers, Livakovic and Japan's Shuichi Gonda, were outstanding. Their best work? Gonda diving on 66 minutes to keep out a dipping Luka Modric half-volley; Livakovic doing well to beat out a Mitoma belter effort in extra-time.

"We created problems for ourselves. We were nervous and conceded a goal through it. But you must never underestimate a Croat"
Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic

MATTER OF FACT

Croatia No.1 Dominik Livakovic became only the third goalkeeper in World Cup history to save three spot-kicks in a penalty shootout.

Penalty hero ...Livakovic



MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 7PM

BRAZIL (4) 4
(Vinicius Junior 7, Neymar 13 pen, Richarlison 29, Paqueta 36)

SOUTH KOREA (0) 1
(Paik Seung-ho 76)

Stadium 974, Doha Att: 43,847 Ref: Turpin (Fra)

BRAZIL Alisson (Weverton 80); Militao (Dani Alves 63), Marquinhos, Thiago Silva, Danilo (Bremer 72); Paqueta, Casemiro; Raphinha, Neymar (Rodrygo 81), Vinicius Junior (Martinelli 72); Richarlison.

SOUTH KOREA Kim Seung-gyu; Kim Moon-hwan, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su (Hong Chul 46); Lee Jae-sung (Lee Kang-in 74), Jung Woo-young (Son Jun-ho 46), Hwang In-beom (Paik Seung-ho 65), Hwang Hee-chan; Cho Gue-sung (Hwang Ui-jo 80), Son Heung-min.
🟨 Jung Woo-young

GOALS

1-0 Raphinha, jinking away on the right wing, cuts the ball back for Neymar, who cannot connect. Vincius Junior takes over, stroking the ball home brilliantly with his side foot through a forest of bodies.

SAMBA PARTY TIME

Revitalised by the return from injury of attacking talisman Neymar, Brazil zoomed out of the starting blocks with a vengeance, producing a stunning first-half rendition of the beautiful game. The South Koreans would have been hoping to keep it tight in those crucial stages. Instead, Son and company were blown away, scattered to the four winds by typical Brazilian virtuosity. To their credit, the Koreans did not let their heads drop and they more than held their own in the creativity stakes, forcing Brazil goalkeeper Alisson into a number of smart interventions. Paik Seung-ho's sensational consolation goal was very much in keeping with this festival of high-quality finishing.

Celebrating... Samba style

2-0 Jung Woo-young agriculturally attempts a clearance but only kicks Richarlison, who had nipped in front of him. Neymar nonchalantly rolls the penalty into the bottom right.

3-0 Richarlison plays a spot of head tennis with himself. Following slick passes from Marquinhos and Thiago Silva, Richarlison's side-foot finish does the rest. Sublime goal.

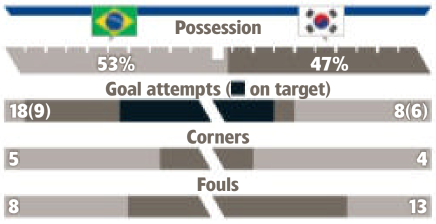
4-0 Neymar plays the ball out to Vinicius Junior on the overlap and he dinks the ball into the middle, where Lucas Paqueta volleys in.

4-1 Brazil partially clear a Korea free-kick. Substitute Paik Seung-ho takes a touch before breaking the back of the net with a howitzer.

"There always will be bad people who see dancing to celebrate goals as a lack of respect. It's just the joy of scoring a goal"
Brazil coach Tite

MATTER OF FACT

Every player in Brazil's 26-man squad has now made at least one World Cup 2022 appearance.



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 3PM

MOROCCO (0) 0

SPAIN (0) 0

After Extra-Time; 0-0 at 90 mins; Morocco win 3-0 on penalties
Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan Att: 44,667 Ref: Rapallini (Arg)

All hail "Bono"... Morocco celebrate

MOROCCO Bounou; Hakimi, Aguerd (El Yamiq 84), Saiss, Mazraoui (Attiat Allah 82); Ounahi (Benoun 120), Amrabat, Amallah (Cheddira 82); Ziyech, En-Nesyri (Sabiri 82), Boufal (Ezzalzouli 66).
🟨 Saiss

SPAIN Simon; Llorente, Rodri, Laporte, Alba (Balde 98); Gavi (Soler 63), Busquets, Pedri; F. Torres (Williams 75, Sarabia 118), Asensio (Morata 63), Olmo (Fati 98).
🟨 Laporte

PENALTIES (Morocco first)

Sabiri	1-0	1-0	Sarabia
Ziyech	2-0	2-0	Soler
Benoun	2-0	2-0	Busquets
Hakimi	3-0		

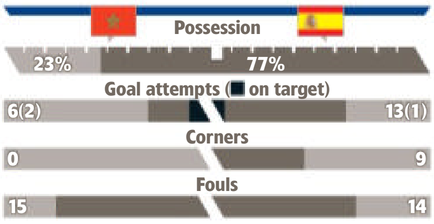
MOROCCANS STUN SPAIN

Fifty-two years since their first World Cup experience in Mexico in 1970, Morocco's Class of 2022 will forever be known as immortals after this extraordinary penalty-shootout victory over heavyweight favourites Spain. Through to their first-ever World Cup quarter-finals, the Atlas Lions became only the fourth African nation (along with Cameroon, Senegal and Ghana), and the first from North Africa, to make it to the last eight of the greatest football show on Earth. Spain coach Luis Enrique declared on the eve of the match that his charges had done their shootout "homework", each taking 1,000 penalties before the tournament. How wrong he was. While the Moroccans, no doubt boosted by keeping *La Roja* at bay for 120 minutes, looked serenely assured, Spain appeared to wilt under the pressure, Pablo Sarabia hitting the post and Carlos Soler and Sergio Busquets both denied by heroic Lions goalkeeper Yassine Bounou (aka "Bono"), who ironically plays in Spain for Sevilla. The winning penalty, a clipped Panenka effort from Madrid-born full-back Achraf Hakimi, perfectly illustrated the Moroccan approach on the night – brave, cheeky and supremely confident. The Spanish only had themselves to blame. Despite again having the lion's share of possession, they did very little with it, too predictable and laboured to trouble Morocco's wonderfully organised defensive set-up. Even without dominating the ball, the counter-attacking Moroccans enjoyed the best chances. Centre-back Nayef Aguerd should have done better with a header from a Sofiane Boufal cross in the first half, as should sub Walid Cheddira when breaking clean through in extra-time. That being said, Spain's Pablo Sarabia almost won it at the death when grazing the post.

> **"We had injured, bandaged players who still raised their game. We gave everything we had not to lose against the best team in possession in the world"**
> *Morocco coach Walid Regragui*

MATTER OF FACT

Spain have now lost four of their five World Cup penalty shootouts – this defeat adding to losses versus Russia, South Korea and Belgium.



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 7PM

PORTUGAL (2) 6

(Ramos 17, 51, 67, Pepe 33, Guerreiro 55, Leao 90+2)

SWITZERLAND (0) 1

(Akanji 58)

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail Att: 83,720 Ref: Ramos (Mex)

PORTUGAL Costa; Dalot, Pepe, Dias, Guerreiro; William, Otavio (Vitinha 74); Fernandes (Leao 87), Bernardo Silva (Neves 81), Joao Felix (Ronaldo 74); Ramos (Horta 74).

SWITZERLAND Sommer; Fernandes, Akanji, Schar (Comert 46), Rodriguez, Vargas (Okafor 66); Sow (Seferovic 54), Xhaxa, Freuler (Zakaria 54); Shaqiri, Embolo (Jashari 89).
🟨 Schar, Comert

GOALS

1-0 Joao Felix picks out Goncalo Ramos in the box, who turns and surprises everyone by slamming the ball in from the tightest of angles.
2-0 Pepe shows prodigious hang time to power in a header from a Bruno Fernandes corner.
3-0 Diogo Dalot crosses from the right and Ramos gets ahead of his marker to prod in at the near post.
4-0 Joao Felix plays a give-and-go with Otavio in the middle of the park before feeding Ramos, who immediately finds the onrushing Raphael Guerreiro. He smashes the ball into the roof of the net.
4-1 Xherdan Shaqiri's corner deflects off Ramos and Manuel Akanji volleys in at the far post.
5-1 Set up by Joao Felix, Ramos finishes with a stylish dink over the advancing Yann Sommer.
6-1 Sub Rafael Leao plays a one-two with Guerreiro on the left, cuts inside and curls in a brilliant shot.

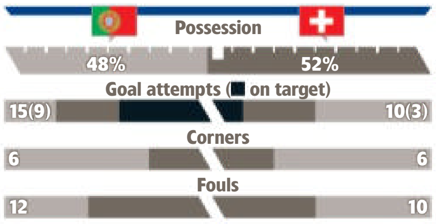
PORTUGAL HIT SWISS FOR SIX

Who needs CR7? In their best team performance for many a year, the Portuguese simply toyed with an unambitious, one-dimensional Switzerland, who never got to grips with their opponents' quick-thinking on the ball, superior movement and fluidity. Portugal coach Fernando Santos clearly made the right decision when he opted to leave Cristiano Ronaldo out of his starting XI, replacing him with rising Benfica star Goncalo Ramos. Making his first start for Portugal, Ramos was absolutely irresistible, not only registering a wonderful hat-trick and an assist, but also productive in his aerial work, running and link-up play.

> **"He [Goncalo Ramos] will be buying us all dinner tomorrow"**
> *Portugal midfielder William Carvalho*

MATTER OF FACT

Goncalo Ramos is the first player to score a hat-trick on his first World Cup start since Germany striker Miroslav Klose in 2002.



New star... Goncalo Ramos

GROUP A

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 4PM

QATAR (0) 0

ECUADOR (2) 2
(Valencia 16 pen, 31)

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor
Att: 67,372 Ref: Orsato (Ita)

QATAR Al Sheeb; Pedro Miguel, Al Rawi, Khoukhi, Hassan, Homam; Al Haydos (Waad 71), Boudiaf, Hatem; Afif, Almoez (Muntari 72).
🟨 Al Sheeb, Almoez, Boudiaf, Afif

ECUADOR Galindez; An. Preciado, Torres, Hincapie, Estupinan; Plata, Mendez, Caicedo (Franco 90), Ibarra (Sarmiento 68); Valencia (Cifuentes 77), Estrada (Rodriguez 90).
🟨 Caicedo, Mendez

GOALS

0-1 Qatari custodian Saad Al Sheeb brings down Enner Valencia in a one-on-one situation, and the striker coolly converts the spot-kick.

0-2 A pinpoint cross by right-back Angel Preciado is headed in expertly at the far post by the unmarked Valencia for his second.

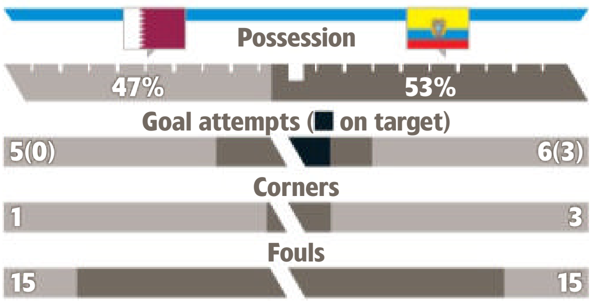
United...Ecuador celebrate Enner Valencia's opener

VALENCIA SPOILS THE PARTY

Enner Valencia ensured Qatar's World Cup bow was a miserable one by scoring twice, while he also had another disallowed after three minutes for an offside that only the new VAR technology could spot. For two of his three "goals" Qatar's Saad Al Sheeb made a dreadful mistake, giving Valencia, who'd already scored three times at the 2014 World Cup, the chance to net the first goal of the 2022 tournament. The hosts never looked capable of making it a contest, and many Arab spectators left long before the final whistle.

MATTER OF FACT

After 16 wins and six draws at the previous 21 World Cups (including joint-hosts), Qatar are the first host nation to lose their opening game.



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 4PM

SENEGAL (0) 0

NETHERLANDS (0) 2
(Gakpo 84, Klaassen 90+9)

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha
Att: 41,721 Ref: Sampaio (Bra)

SENEGAL E. Mendy; Sabaly, Koulibaly, Cisse, Diallo (Jakobs 62); Kouyate (P. Gueye 73), N. Mendy, I. Gueye; Diatta (Jackson 73), Dia (Dieng 69), I. Sarr.
🟨 N. Mendy, I. Gueye

NETHERLANDS Noppert; Dumfries, De Ligt, Van Dijk, Ake, Blind; Berghuis (Koopmeiners 79), F. De Jong, Gakpo (De Roon 90+4); Janssen (Depay 62), Bergwijn (Klaassen 79).
🟨 De Ligt

GOALS

0-1 Frenkie de Jong's chipped cross is headed in by Cody Gakpo, beating onrushing keeper Edouard Mendy who arrives too late.

0-2 A counter-attack ends with sub Davy Klaassen tapping in a rebound after keeper Mendy poorly parries Memphis Depay's shot.

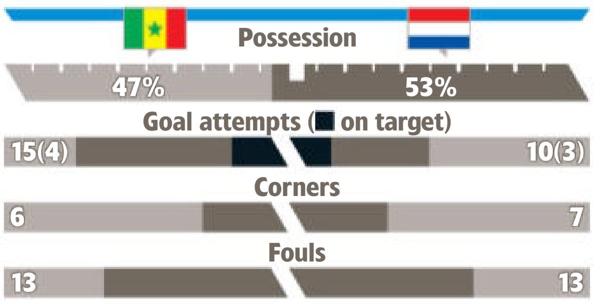
Crucial...Cody Gakpo beats keeper Edouard Mendy to the ball

GAKPO SAVES THE DAY

Cody Gakpo, whose father hails from Togo, broke the deadlock for the Dutch against the African champions. The PSV ace was selected to bring more creativity with Memphis Depay unable to play the full 90 minutes, and in a lively game he proved to be the difference. Senegal lacked creativity in the absence of talisman Sadio Mane, and newly-capped Dutch keeper Andries Noppert, nicknamed "The Tower of Joure", kept a clean sheet.

MATTER OF FACT

Senegal and Netherlands had never played against each other before, partly because of the *Oranje's* absence at Senegal's previous two World Cup appearances (2002 and 2018).



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1PM

QATAR (0) 1
(Muntari 78)

SENEGAL (1) 3
(Dia 41, Diedhiou 48, Dieng 84)

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha
Att: 41,797 Ref: Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

QATAR Barsham; Mohammad, Pedro Miguel (Waad 83), Khoukhi, Hassan, Homam (Salman 83); Boudiaf (Hatem 69), Madibo, Al Haydos (Muntari 74); Afif, Almoez.
🟨 Mohammad, Homam, Madibo

SENEGAL E. Mendy; Sabaly, Koulibaly, Diallo, Jakobs (Cisse 77); I. Sarr (I. Ndiaye 74), N. Mendy (P. Sarr 77), I. Gueye, Diatta (Ciss 64); Dia, Diedhiou (Dieng 74).
🟨 Dia, Jakobs, Ciss

GOALS

0-1 Defender Boualem Khoukhi slips in the area, allowing Boulaye Dia to open the scoring.

0-2 Famara Diedhiou wonderfully heads in a dangerous inswinging corner by Ismail Jakobs.

1-2 Mohammed Muntari finishes a cross by Ismail Mohammad with a powerful header.

1-3 Senegal seal the win with the unmarked Bamba Dieng converting an Iliman Ndiaye cross.

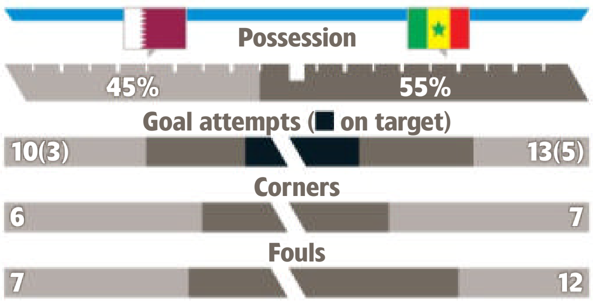
Despair... hosts Qatar crash out

QATAR FIRST TEAM TO BE ELIMINATED

For the first time ever the African and Asian champions met at the World Cup, and it was Senegal who kept their hopes alive of reaching the next round. Their two-goal advantage was only in danger when Ghana-born Mohammed Muntari scored the hosts' first goal at a World Cup, but Senegal restored order just minutes later. The result meant Qatar are the first-ever host nation to be eliminated after two games.

MATTER OF FACT

This match was an encounter of two totally different squads. Qatar's roster consists entirely of home-based players, while all of Senegal's players are plying their trade abroad.



	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
NETHERLANDS	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
SENEGAL	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
ECUADOR	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
QATAR	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

GROUP A

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 4PM

NETHERLANDS (1) 1
(Gakpo 6)

ECUADOR (0) 1
(Valencia 49)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 44,833 Ref: Ghorbal (Alg)

NETHERLANDS Noppert; Dumfries, Timber, Van Dijk, Ake, Blind; Koopmeiners (De Roon 79), F. De Jong, Klaassen (Berghuis 69); Gakpo (Weghorst 80), Bergwijn (Depay 46).

ECUADOR Galindez; An. Preciado, Porozo, Torres, Hincapie, Estupinan; Plata (Ibarra 90), Mendez, Caicedo, Valencia (Rodriguez 90); Estrada (Sarmiento 74).
🟨 Mendez

GOALS

1-0 An interception by Klaassen creates a chance for Gakpo, and his hard, well-placed 20-yard drive gives Hernan Galindez no chance.
1-1 Andries Noppert parries Pervis Estupinan's low, diagonal shot and Enner Valencia pounces.

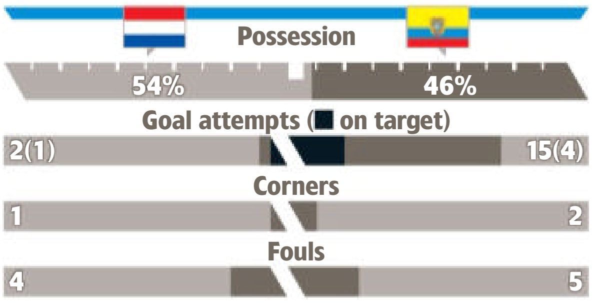
On target again ...Enner Valencia

ECUADOR SPURN GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Ecuador not only wasted the chance to gain their first-ever win against the Netherlands, but also the opportunity to become the first team to book their place in the next round. The physical South Americans played with much more passion than the lacklustre Dutch, who were never able to keep control after Cody Gakpo's early strike. Ecuador, with Enner Valencia on the scoresheet for the third time this tournament, were unlucky with a disallowed Pervis Estupinan goal for offside and an effort by Gonzalo Plata that smashed the crossbar.

MATTER OF FACT

Netherlands' paltry effort of just two shots is the lowest mustered by a European team in a World Cup match since records began.



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 3PM

ECUADOR (0) 1
(Caicedo 67)

SENEGAL (1) 2
(I. Sarr 44 pen, Koulibaly 70)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 44,569 Ref: Turpin (Fra)

ECUADOR Galindez; An. Preciado (Porozo 85), Torres, Hincapie, Estupinan; Franco (Sarmiento 46), Gruezo (Cifuentes 46), Caicedo; Plata, Estrada (Reasco 64), Valencia.

SENEGAL E. Mendy; Sabaly, Koulibaly, Diallo, Jakobs; Ciss (N. Mendy 74), P. Gueye; I. Ndiaye (Dieng 75), I. Gueye, I. Sarr; Dia (Cisse 90+5).
🟨 I. Gueye

GOALS

0-1 Ismaila Sarr bursts into the penalty area, but his progress is ended by Piero Hincapie. Sarr himself steps up to coolly convert the spot-kick.
1-1 Felix Torres heads a Gonzalo Plata corner into the direction of the far post, where Moises Caicedo is on hand to score from close range.
1-2 A free-kick by Idrissa Gana Gueye is not cleared properly, providing Kalidou Koulibaly the opportunity to score with a well-placed volley.

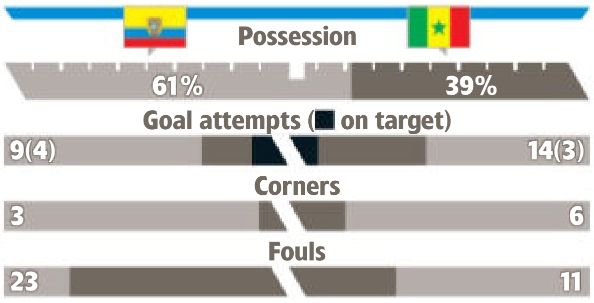
Winner...Koulibaly sends Senegal through

FIRST AFRICAN NATION TO ADVANCE

Ecuador only needed a draw to reach the next round but looked paralysed by the pressure. Senegal's goals were clumsy mistakes by the South Americans and their equaliser was against the run of play. Based on this confrontation and guided by the commanding captain and Chelsea defender Kalidou Koulibaly, Senegal totally deserved to go through, becoming the first African country to do so this tournament.

MATTER OF FACT

It was a day of joy and sorrow for Senegal as they qualified two years to the day after 2002 World Cup hero, and coach Aliou Cisse's team-mate, Papa Bouba Diop, passed away aged 42.



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 3PM

NETHERLANDS (1) 2
(Gakpo 26, F. De Jong 49)

QATAR (0) 0

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor
Att: 66,784 Ref: Gassama (Gam)

NETHERLANDS Noppert; Dumfries, Timber, Van Dijk, Ake, Blind; De Roon (Koopmeiners 83), F. De Jong (Taylor 86), Klaassen (Berghuis 66); Gakpo (Weghorst 83), Depay (Janssen 66).
🟨 Ake

QATAR Barsham; Mohammad (Kheder 85), Pedro Miguel, Khoukhi, Hassan, Homam; Al Haydos (Asad 64), Madibo (Boudiaf 64), Hatem (Alaaeldin 85); Afif, Almoez (Muntari 64).

GOALS

1-0 A combination between Davy Klaassen and Cody Gakpo is clinically finished by the latter.
2-0 Meshaal Barsham stops Memphis Depay's shot from close range, but Frenkie de Jong is quickest to react and taps in number two.

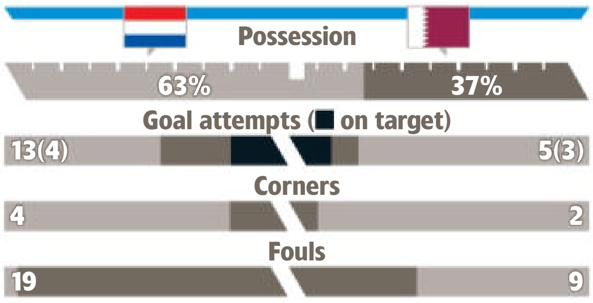
Three in a row ...Cody Gakpo

DUTCH QUALIFY BUT FAIL TO CONVINCE

Netherlands' top spot was never in danger in their last group match, with a weak Qatari side failing to create any meaningful problems for Louis van Gaal's team. But, like in previous games, the Dutch failed to convince. Instead of buckling under pressure to include more creative players, such as Xavi Simons, the experienced coach insisted on giving Memphis Depay, on his way back from injury, more playing time and to find the right defensive partner beside Frenkie de Jong. Qatar are the first-ever World Cup host nation to fail to clinch a single point.

MATTER OF FACT

Oranje have never failed to reach the next round since group phases were introduced, winning 21 out of 33 games and losing just twice.



GROUP B

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1PM

ENGLAND (3) 6
(Bellingham 35, Saka 43, 63, Sterling 45+1, Rashford 71, Grealish 90)

IRAN (0) 2
(Taremi 65, 90+13 pen)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 45,334 Ref: Claus (Bra)

ENGLAND Pickford; Trippier, Stones, Maguire (Dier 70), Shaw; Bellingham, Rice, Mount (Foden 71); Saka (Rashford 71), Kane (Wilson 76), Sterling (Grealish 71).

IRAN Beyranvand (H. Hosseini 20); Moharrami, Pouraliganji, Cheshmi (Kanaanizadegan 46), M. Hosseini, Mohammadi (Torabi 63); Jahanbakhsh (Gholizadeh 46), Noorollahi (Azmoun 77), Karimi (Ezatolahi 46), Hajisafi; Taremi.
🟨 Jahanbakhsh, Pouraliganji

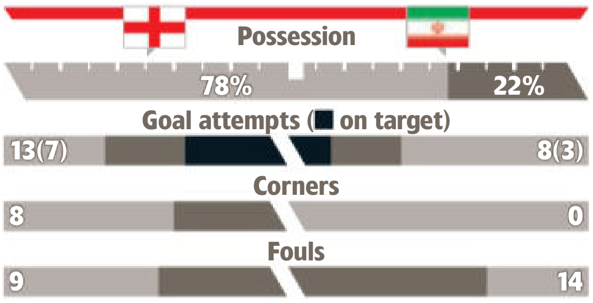
GOALS

1-0 Bellingham heads in Luke Shaw's cross.
2-0 Saka nets a brilliant controlled half-volley.
3-0 Sterling stabs in Kane's hard, low centre.
4-0 Saka steps across the defence and slots in.
4-1 Mehdi Taremi blasts home a rifled finish.
5-1 Marcus Rashford shows quick feet to score just seconds after coming off the subs' bench.
6-1 Jack Grealish, another goalscoring sub, taps in from Callum Wilson's unselfish cut-back.
6-2 Taremi converts a last-gasp penalty.

Flyer...Bellingham celebrates with Mount

ENGLAND'S BEST START

England recorded their best-ever start to a World Cup with a decisive victory. Jude Bellingham was outstanding in defending, creating and scoring while Bukayo Saka's man-of-the-match display was a powerful response to his abusers after his penalty failure in the Euro 2020 final. The game took place to a political backdrop with the FA backing down under FIFA pressure on the plan for Harry Kane to wear a OneLove armband and Iran's team bravely refusing to sing their national anthem in support of protests back home.



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 7PM

UNITED STATES (1) 1
(Weah 36)

WALES (0) 1
(Bale 82 pen)

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 43,418 Ref: Al Jassim (Qat)

UNITED STATES Turner; Dest (Yedlin 74), Zimmerman, Ream, Robinson; McKennie (Aaronson 66), Adams, Musah (Acosta 75); Weah (Morris 88), Sargent (Wright 74), Pulisic.
🟨 Dest, McKennie, Ream, Acosta

WALES Hennessey; Roberts, Mepham, Rodon, B. Davies, N. Williams (Johnson 79); Ramsey, Ampadu (Morrell 90+5), Wilson (Thomas 90+3); Bale, James (Moore 46).
🟨 Bale, Mepham

GOALS

1-0 A through pass from Christian Pulisic slices open the Wales defence and Timothy Weah accelerates clear to slide home.
1-1 Gareth Bale is recklessly brought down from behind by Walker Zimmerman and he steps up to rifle home the resultant penalty.

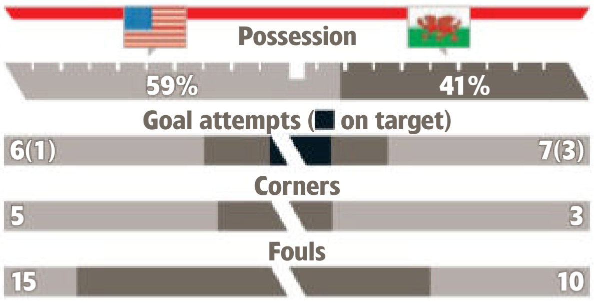
Game-changer...Wales striker Kieffer Moore

US AND WALES IN GAME OF TWO HALVES

United States controlled the entire first half and should have been more than one goal ahead at the interval. Josh Sargent missed with a close-range header before Weah opened the scoring. Wales boss Rob Page sent on Kieffer Moore up front for the second half which inspired a revival. Ben Davies had a diving header tipped over the bar by Matt Turner before incessant pressure brought the penalty and deserved equaliser.

MATTER OF FACT

Gareth Bale's late penalty made him only the fourth Wales player to score at the World Cup finals after John Charles, Ivor Allchurch and Terry Medwin in Sweden in 1958.



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 10AM

WALES (0) 0

IRAN (0) 2
(Cheshmi 90+8, Rezaeian 90+11)

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 40,875 Ref: Escobar (Gua)

WALES Hennessey; Roberts (Johnson 57), Mepham, Rodon, B. Davies, N. Williams; Ramsey (Ward 87), Ampadu (Allen 77), Wilson (James 58); Bale, Moore.
🟨 Rodon 🟥 Hennessey

IRAN H. Hosseini; Rezaeian, M. Hosseini, Pouraliganji, Mohammadi; Gholizadeh (Jahanbakhsh 77), Ezatolahi (Karimi 83), Noorollahi (Cheshmi 78), Hajisafi (Torabi 77); Taremi, Azmoun (Ansarifard 68).
🟨 Rezaeian, Jahanbakhsh

GOALS

0-1 Iran pile on the pressure and Joe Allen's weak clearance is collected by Rouzbeh Cheshmi, who thunders home the first goal from outside the penalty box in these finals.
0-2 Wales charge forward in pursuit of an equaliser, but Iran counter-attack and Ramin Rezaeian runs on through to score.

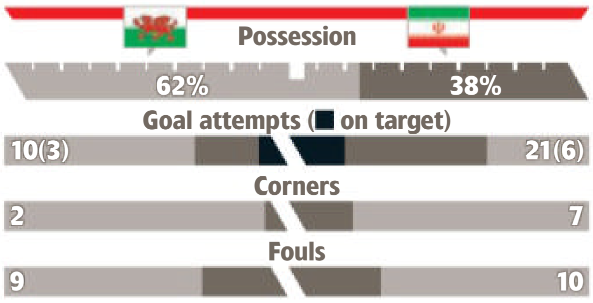
Saviour...last-gasp Cheshmi comes to the rescue

IRAN MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME

Iran recovered composure and verve to revive their qualifying dream. Team Melli deserved the three points. They had one goal disallowed in the first half and twice struck the post in the second, before scoring both goals in stoppage time. By that time Wales had been reduced to ten men in the 86th minute after goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey was sent off for flattening the onrushing Mehdi Taremi. Coach Carlos Queiroz said: "It was a wonderful day for us. We were back to football. We did it for the fans."

MATTER OF FACT

Carlos Queiroz was managing at the World Cup finals for the third successive time with Iran.



GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ENGLAND	3	2	1	0	9	2	7
UNITED STATES	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
IRAN	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
WALES	3	0	1	2	1	6	1

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 7PM

ENGLAND (0) 0
UNITED STATES (0) 0

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor
Att: 68,463 Ref: Valenzuela (Ven)

ENGLAND Pickford; Trippier, Stones, Maguire, Shaw; Bellingham (Henderson 69), Rice, Mount; Saka (Rashford 78), Kane, Sterling (Grealish 68).

UNITED STATES Turner; Dest (Moore 78), Zimmerman, Ream, Robinson; McKennie (Aaronson 77), Adams, Musah; Weah (Reyna 83), Wright (Sargent 83), Pulisic.

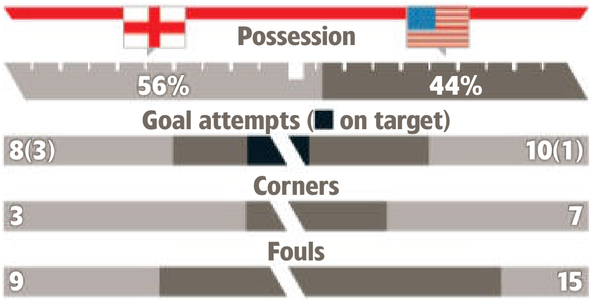
Hard fought... there was little to separate the sides

DISAPPOINTED FANS TURN ON ENGLAND

England were booed off by their supporters who felt let down after the expectations raised by the six-goal performance against Iran. They could have ensured their place in the round of 16 had they won. United States put on a lively performance and never let England settle with their intense pressing tactics, and saw Christian Pulisic hit the bar in the first half. England went close on only two occasions. Mason Mount had a low drive well saved by US goalkeeper Matt Turner for a corner just before half-time and captain Harry Kane headed wide in second-half stoppage-time. Manager Gareth Southgate said: "The objective is to qualify. We have to stay calm in these tournaments. We've been through this before but we're on track. We can still improve. That's going to be our target." US' Gregg Berhalter said: "Both teams gave each other difficulties at times. All in all I'm pleased with our effort. Any time you can get a shutout in a World Cup is good."

MATTER OF FACT

Eight members of the United States' World Cup squad play their club football in England.



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 7PM

WALES (0) 0
ENGLAND (0) 3

(Rashford 50, 68, Foden 51)

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 44,297 Ref: Vincic (Svn)

WALES Hennessey; N. Williams (Roberts 36), Mepham, Rodon, B. Davies (Morrell 59); Allen (Colwill 81), Ampadu; Bale (Johnson 46), Ramsey, James (Wilson 77); Moore.
🟨 James, Ramsey

ENGLAND Pickford; Walker (Alexander-Arnold 57), Stones, Maguire, Shaw (Trippier 65); Henderson, Rice (Phillips 58), Bellingham; Foden, Kane (Wilson 58), Rashford (Grealish 76).

GOALS

0-1 Foden wins a free-kick and Rashford immediately takes charge, powerfully curling it wide of the wall and past Danny Ward's left hand.
0-2 Rashford presses Ben Davies into losing possession on the right, allowing Kane to power a low cross to the far post where Foden taps in.
0-3 Phillips releases Rashford down the right, he cuts inside and shoots through Ward's legs.

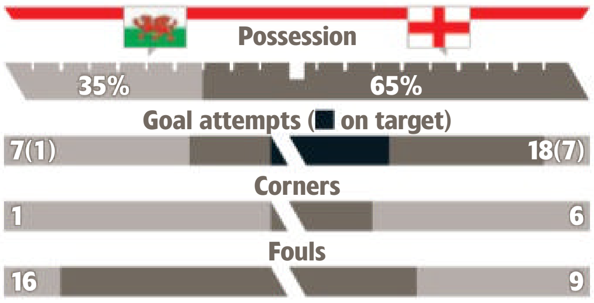
Stupendous... Rashford's free-kick

THREE LIONS OUTCLASS DRAGONS

England confirmed their presence in the last 16 by defeating Wales in an historic first meeting at the World Cup between two British nations. Decisively, England manager Gareth Southgate gave starts to Marcus Rashford and Phil Foden, however the improvement on the drab draw with the US was not immediate. Only after the interval did England produce an explosive spell of three goals inside 20 minutes. The *hwyl* of Wales' qualifying campaign was missing with star veterans Bale and Ramsey virtually anonymous.

MATTER OF FACT

Marcus Rashford's second goal brought up 100 for England in World Cup finals matches.



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 7PM

IRAN (0) 0
UNITED STATES (1) 1

(Pulisic 38)

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha
Att: 42,127 Ref: Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

IRAN Beyranvand; Rezaeian, M. Hosseini, Pouraliganji, Mohammadi (Karimi 45+3); Gholizadeh (Ansarifard 78), Ezatolahi, Noorollahi (Torabi 71), Hajisafi (Jalali 72); Taremi; Azmoun (Ghoddos 46).
🟨 M. Hosseini, Kanaanizadegan, Jalali

UNITED STATES Turner; Dest (Moore 82), Carter-Vickers, Ream, Robinson; Musah, Adams, McKennie (Acosta 65); Weah (Zimmerman 82), Sargent (Wright 77), Pulisic (Aaronson 46).
🟨 Adams

GOALS

0-1 Sergino Dest heads a lofted pass from Weston McKennie across the penalty area for an onrushing Pulisic to bravely score from close in.

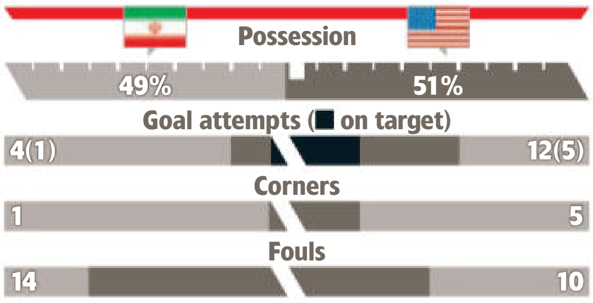
Hurt...Pulisic collides with Beyranvand for his goal

US COME OUT ON TOP IN GRUDGE MATCH

This match was played in a generally correct spirit, despite the tense political context, and ended with the US overtaking Iran on points to finish as group runners-up. Iran put pressure on the US defence early on, but rarely caused much trouble whilst being unsettled themselves in defence by the pace of Christian Pulisic and Timothy Weah, the latter of whom had a goal ruled out for offside. Iran stepped up their attacking efforts after the break and threatened through Saman Ghoddos, Saeid Ezatolahi and Ali Karimi. In stoppage-time Morteza Pouraliganji headed a free-kick narrowly wide and Mehdi Taremi had an appeal for a penalty rejected.

MATTER OF FACT

George Weah, former Ballon d'Or winner and current president of Liberia, was in the crowd to watch his son Timothy starring in the US attack.



GROUP C

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 10AM

ARGENTINA (1) 1
(Messi 10 pen)

SAUDI ARABIA (0) 2
(Al Shehri 48, S. Al Dawsari 53)

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail
Att: 88,012 Ref: Vincic (Svn)

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Molina, Romero (Li. Martinez 59), Otamendi, Tagliafico (Acuna 71); De Paul, Paredes (Fernandez 59); Di Maria, Messi, Gomez (Alvarez 59); La. Martinez.

SAUDI ARABIA Al Owais; Abdulhamid, Al Tambakti, Al Bulayhi, Al Shahrani (Al Burayk 90+9); Al Malki, Kanno; Al Buraikan (Asiri 89), Al Faraj (Al Abed 45+4, Al Amri 88), S. Al Dawsari; Al Shehri (Al Ghannam 78).
🟨 Al Malki, Al Bulayhi, S. Al Dawsari, Abdulhamid, Al Abed, Al Owais

GOALS

1-0 Messi coolly nets his penalty after Saud Abdulhamid is penalised for grabbing Paredes.
1-1 Saleh Al Shehri capitalises on some poor Argentine defending from a ball straight through the middle to fire across Emiliano Martinez.
1-2 Salem Al Dawsari cuts inside and curls a stunning right-footed shot into the top corner.

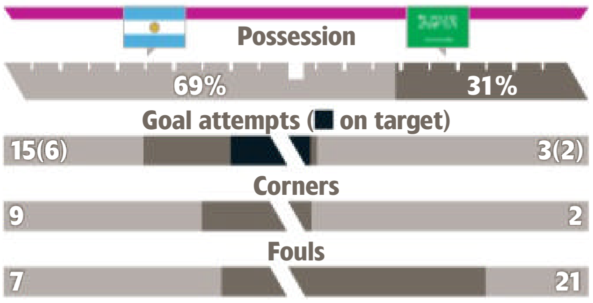
Stunning strike... Salem Al Dawsari

SAUDIS STUN ARGENTINA

Lionel Messi scored ten minutes into his fifth World Cup but Saudi Arabia quite literally refused to back down, playing a brave high line that saw *La Albiceleste* score three goals that were called offside. Even after losing captain Salman Al Faraj shortly before half-time, Saudi Arabia emerged from the break defiantly and shocked Argentina with two goals after the restart. Herve Renard's men then gave a Herculean effort to hold out with Hassan Al Tambakti particularly inspirational.

MATTER OF FACT

This shock defeat ended Argentina's 36-match unbeaten run that had dated back to July 2019.



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 4PM

MEXICO (0) 0

POLAND (0) 0

Stadium 974, Doha
Att: 39,369 Ref: Beath (Aus)

MEXICO Ochoa; Sanchez, Montes, Moreno, Gallardo; Herrera (Rodriguez 71), E. Alvarez, Chavez; Lozano, Martin (Jimenez 71), Vega (Antuna 84).
🟨 Sanchez, Moreno

POLAND Szczesny; Cash, Glik, Kiwior, Bereszynski; Krychowiak; Kaminski, Zielinski (Milik 87), S. Szymanski (Frankowski 72), Zalewski (Bielik 46); Lewandowski.
🟨 Frankowski

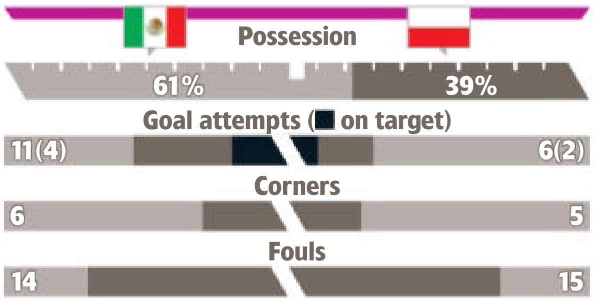
Hero...Ochoa saves Lewandowski's weak spot-kick

OCHOA DENIES LEWANDOWSKI

Argentina's slip up meant there was an even greater incentive for these teams to start with a win, but neither was ready to capitalise. Mexico showed the greater intent in the first half while Poland mostly sat back, and Alexis Vega came agonisingly close to finding the bottom corner with his header before Jorge Sanchez's shot saw Wojciech Szczesny awkwardly tip the ball over the bar. Poland's big chance came just before the hour mark when Robert Lewandowski was pulled down by Hector Moreno in the box. However, Guillermo Ochoa conjured a fantastic save to deny the Polish frontman his first World Cup goal and send the Mexican supporters into rapture. The goalkeeper's heroics momentarily energised *El Tri* and Henry Martin's flicked header from Edson Alvarez's delivery forced Szczesny into another save. Disappointingly, the match eventually returned to a pedestrian pace as the goalless draw was played out.

MATTER OF FACT

Fourth official Stephanie Frappart became the first female to officiate a men's World Cup game.



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1PM

POLAND (1) 2
(Zielinski 39, Lewandowski 82)

SAUDI ARABIA (0) 0

Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 44,259 Ref: Sampaio (Bra)

POLAND Szczesny; Cash, Glik, Kiwior, Bereszynski; Zielinski (Kaminski 63), Bielik, Krychowiak, Frankowski; Milik (Piatek 71), Lewandowski.
🟨 Kiwior, Cash, Milik

SAUDI ARABIA Al Owais; Abdulhamid, Al Amri, Al Bulayhi, Al Burayk (Al Ghannam 65); Al Malki (Al Obud 85); Al Buraikan, Al Najei (Al Abed 46, Bahebri 90+5), Kanno, S. Al Dawsari; Al Shehri (N. Al Dawsari 86)
🟨 Al Malki, Al Amri

GOALS

1-0 A swift move culminates in Lewandowski reaching Matty Cash's cross to tee up Zielinski, who clinically fires into the roof of the net.
2-0 Abdulelah Al Malki's loose touch allows Lewandowski to steal the ball and slot home.

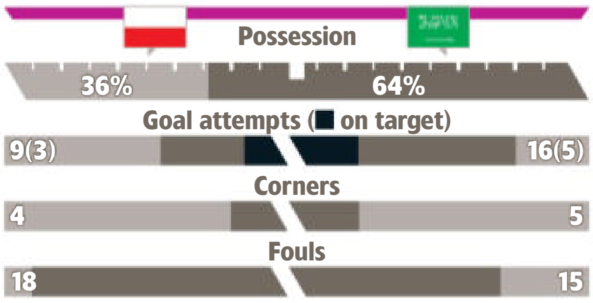
At last...Lewy finally scores at the World Cup

LEWANDOWSKI LIFT-OFF

Buoyed by their historic victory over Argentina, the Saudis put Poland under pressure in the first half, as the Poles amassed three yellow cards in four minutes after Wojciech Szczesny had tipped Mohamed Kanno's strike over the bar. Even after Piotr Zielinski put Poland ahead, Szczesny was the hero as he saved Salem Al Dawsari's penalty in first-half stoppage-time before jumping up to save Mohammed Al Burayk's follow-up, then kept out Al Dawsari's inventive flick in the second half. Arkadisuz Milik and Lewandowski were denied by the woodwork, but the latter eventually scored Poland's second to seal the points.

MATTER OF FACT

Robert Lewandowski's historic strike was his first goal in five appearances at the World Cup.



GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ARGENTINA	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
POLAND	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
MEXICO	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
SAUDI ARABIA	3	1	0	2	3	5	3

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 7PM

ARGENTINA (0) 2
(Messi 64, Fernandez 87)

MEXICO (0) 0

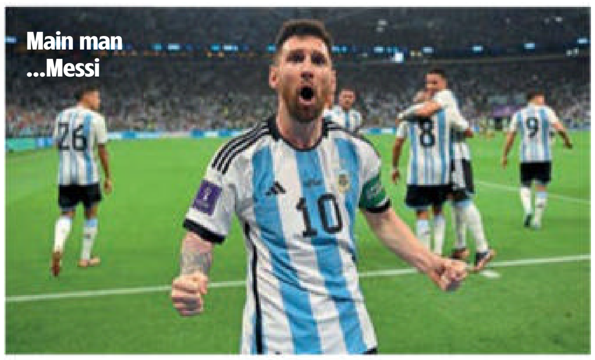
Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail
Att: 88,966 Ref: Orsato (Ita)

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Montiel (Molina 63), Otamendi, Li. Martinez, Acuna; Di Maria (Romero 69), De Paul, Rodriguez (Fernandez 57), Mac Allister (Palacios 69); Messi, La. Martinez (Alvarez 63).
🟨 Montiel

MEXICO Ochoa; K. Alvarez (Jimenez 66), Araujo, Montes, Moreno, Gallardo; Chavez, Herrera, Guardado (Gutierrez 42); Lozano (Alvarado 73), Vega (Antuna 66).
🟨 Araujo, Gutierrez, Herrera, Alvarado

GOALS

1-0 Angel Di Maria picks out Lionel Messi, who hits a pinpoint strike to find the bottom corner.
2-0 After a short corner, Enzo Fernandez beats Erick Gutierrez with a stepover and curls a wonderful strike past Guillermo Ochoa.



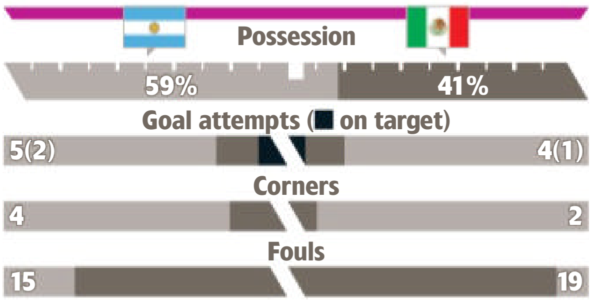
Main man ...Messi

MESSI INSPIRES ARGENTINA

Both teams entered this contest needing inspiration, and Messi came closest to providing it in the opening 45 minutes, hitting a free-kick that Guillermo Ochoa punched awkwardly. Mexico's most exciting moment of the match came from their own free-kick, although Emi Martinez impressively held onto Alexis Vega's effort. *La Albiceleste's* squad has the quality to provide moments of magic but it once again came down to Messi to lift the nation just after the hour mark. Showing off the depth of talent at Lionel Scaloni's disposal, Enzo Fernandez came off the bench to add some comfort with another eye-catching finish from a Messi assist.

MATTER OF FACT

Lionel Messi became the first player to record an assist at five different men's World Cups.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 7PM

POLAND (0) 0

ARGENTINA (0) 2
(Mac Allister 46, Alvarez 67)

Stadium 974, Doha
Att: 44,089 Ref: Makkelie (Ned)

POLAND Szczesny; Cash, Glik, Kiwior, Bereszynski (Jedrzejczyk 72); Zielinski, Bielik (D. Szymanski 62), Krychowiak (Piatek 83), Frankowski (Kaminski 46); Swiderski (Skoras 46), Lewandowski.
🟨 Krychowiak

ARGENTINA E. Martinez; Molina, Otamendi, Romero, Acuna (Tagliafico 59); De Paul, Fernandez (Pezzella 79), Mac Allister (Almada 84); Di Maria (Paredes 59), Messi, Alvarez (La. Martinez 79).
🟨 Acuna

GOALS

0-1 Nahuel Molina's cut-back finds Alexis Mac Allister, whose first-time shot dribbles in off the far post past Wojciech Szczesny.
0-2 After collecting Enzo Fernandez's pass, Julian Alvarez fires brilliantly into the top corner.

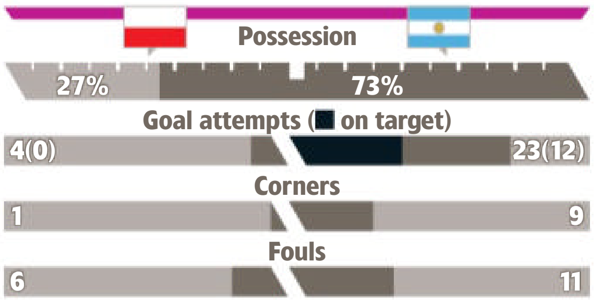
First international goal...Mac Allister

ARGENTINA AND POLAND THROUGH

Needing a win to ensure their progression to the knockout stages, Argentina went on the offensive and Marcos Acuna came agonisingly close before Angel Di Maria almost scored directly from a corner. Their biggest chance came when Leo Messi was caught by Wojciech Szczesny, but the goalkeeper recovered by getting a strong right hand to Messi's penalty. Poland still offered very little after the interval and Argentina scored within a minute of the restart, then again after the hour mark. Jakub Kiwior then escaped punishment for a terrible pass that played substitute Lautaro Martinez in – his miss ensuring both teams went through.

MATTER OF FACT

Poland reached the World Cup knockout stages for the first time since 1986.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 7PM

SAUDI ARABIA (0) 1
(S. Al Dawsari 90+5)

MEXICO (0) 2
(Martin 47, Chavez 52)

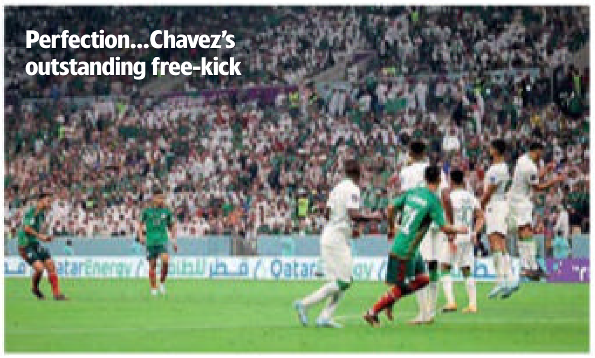
Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail
Att: 84,985 Ref: Oliver (Eng)

SAUDI ARABIA Al Owais; Al Ghannam (Bahebri 88), Al Amri, Al Tambakti, Al Bulayhi (Sharahili 37); Al Hassan (Madu 46), Abdulhamid; S. Al Dawsari, Kanno, Al Buraikan; Al Shehri (Al Obud 62).
🟨 Al Shehri, Al Hassan, Al Tambakti, Madu, Al Amri, Bahebri

MEXICO Ochoa; Sanchez (K. Alvarez 86), Montes, Moreno, Gallardo; E. Alvarez (Funes Mori 86), Chavez; Lozano, Pineda (Rodriguez 77), Vega (Antuna 46); Martin (Jimenez 77).
🟨 E. Alvarez

GOALS

0-1 Cesar Montes' flick from a corner finds Henry Martin, who taps in ahead of his marker.
0-2 Luis Chavez finds the top corner with a left-footed free-kick of outrageous quality.
1-2 Salem Al Dawsari plays a one-two with Hattan Bahebri and calmly finishes.



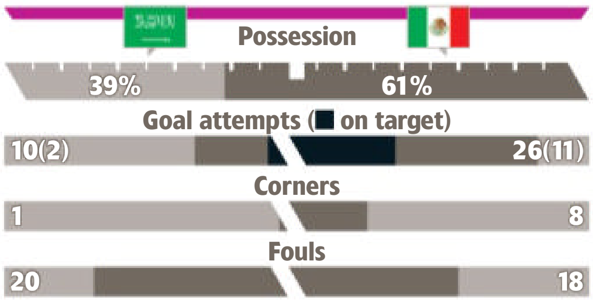
Perfection...Chavez's outstanding free-kick

MEXICO MAGIC TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

Mexico played at a blistering pace in pursuit of the convincing win they needed, but the Saudis' combative response left *El Tri* frustrated in the first half. The picture changed in the second half, as two goals meant Mexico needed just one more to usurp Poland. However, Hirving Lozano and Uriel Antuna were denied by the offside flag, Henry Martin struck over from a promising position, and Mohammed Al Owais made sure he wasn't beaten by another Luis Chavez free-kick. Eventually, Salem Al Dawsari brought Mexico's hopes to a crushing end.

MATTER OF FACT

Mexico last failed to reach the knockouts in 1978.



GROUP D

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1PM

DENMARK (0) 0

TUNISIA (0) 0

Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 42,925 Ref: Ramos (Mex)

DENMARK Schmeichel; Andersen, Kjaer (Jensen 65), Christensen; Kristensen, Hojbjerg, Delaney (Damsgaard 45+1), Maehle; Eriksen; Skov Olsen (Lindstrom 65), Dolberg (Cornelius 65).
🟨 Kristensen, Jensen

TUNISIA Dahmen; Bronn, Meriah, Talbi; Drager (Kechrida 88), Skhiri, Laidouni (Sassi 88), Abdi; Ben Slimane (Sliti 67), Msakni (Mejbri 80); Jebali (Khenissi 80).
🟨 Khenissi

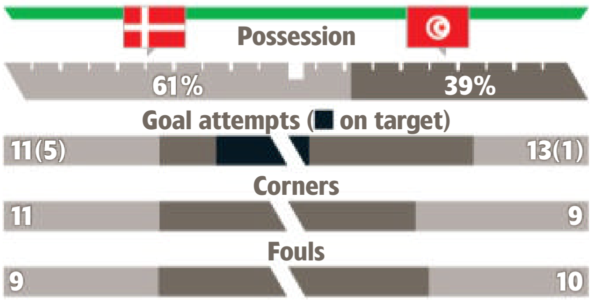
Gilt edge...Cornelius misses a sitter

PLUCKY TUNISIA, DENMARK BELOW PAR

Tunisia brought a vibrancy and energy to this game – epitomised by Aissa Laidouni's emphatic celebration after his early tackle on Christian Eriksen – and nearly fashioned victory against a stuttering Denmark. The North Africans were in control during the first half and almost scored just before the break when Kasper Schmeichel made a fine save from Issam Jebali. Denmark improved with a switch of formation to 4-3-3 that allowed more attacking thrust, yet created very few openings. Eriksen's 20-yard shot was brilliantly tipped away by Aymen Dahmen, and from the subsequent corner substitute Andreas Cornelius somehow headed against a post from just a yard out. There was a VAR check for handball against Tunisian defender Yassine Meriah in added time, but Danish appeals for a penalty were correctly rejected.

MATTER OF FACT

Fifteen of the 24 shots in this match came in the aftermath of a corner kick, the most recorded in a World Cup game since 1966.



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 7PM

FRANCE (2) 4

(Rabiot 27, Giroud 32, 71, Mbappe 68)

AUSTRALIA (1) 1

(Goodwin 9)

Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah
Att: 40,875 Ref: Gomes (RSA)

FRANCE Lloris; Pavard (Kounde 89), Konate, Upamecano, L. Hernandez (T. Hernandez 13); Tchouameni (Fofana 77), Rabiot; Dembele (Coman 77), Griezmann, Mbappe; Giroud (Thuram 89).

AUSTRALIA Ryan; Atkinson (Degenek 85), Souttar, Rowles, Behich; Mooy; Leckie, Irvine (Baccus 85), McGree (Mabil 73), Goodwin (Kuol 73); Duke (Cummings 56).
🟨 Duke, Irvine, Mooy

GOALS

0-1 A brilliant switch of play allows Mathew Leckie to cross from the right and Craig Goodwin converts beyond Hugo Lloris at the far post.
1-1 Adrien Rabiot heads home smartly from a left-wing cross by substitute Theo Hernandez.
2-1 A clever flick from Mbappe puts Rabiot free and his pass is swept home by Giroud.
3-1 Ousmane Dembele curls in a cross from the right and Mbappe heads in off the post.
4-1 Mbappe skips past his marker and crosses from the left for Giroud to head home powerfully.

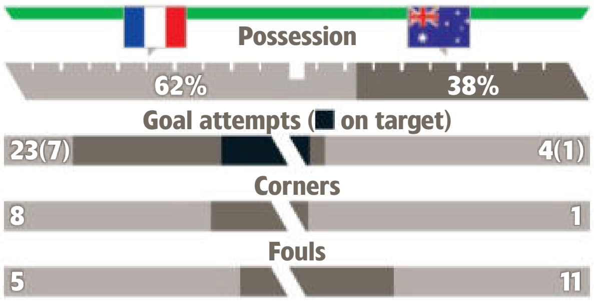
At the double...
Olivier Giroud

MBAPPE SPARKLES FOR LES BLEUS

Kylian Mbappe gave instant evidence of his excellence with a dazzling display to inspire France after the shock of conceding an early goal. He overwhelmed Australia, and there was also a joy in his play that can sometimes seem absent. Olivier Giroud showed he can be a more than capable alternative to Karim Benzema, who missed the tournament with a late injury.

MATTER OF FACT

Giroud's double saw him equal Thierry Henry on 51 goals as France's all-time record scorer.



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 10AM

TUNISIA (0) 0

AUSTRALIA (1) 1

(Duke 23)

Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah
Att: 41,823 Ref: Siebert (Ger)

TUNISIA Dahmen; Bronn (Kechrida 73), Meriah, Talbi; Drager (Sassi 46), Skhiri, Laidouni (Khazri 67), Abdi; Sliti, Msakni; Jebali (Khenissi 73).
🟨 Laidouni, Abdi, Sassi

AUSTRALIA Ryan; Karacic (Degenek 75), Souttar, Rowles, Behich; Leckie (Baccus 85), Irvine, Mooy, Goodwin (Mabil 85); McGree (Hrustic 64), Duke (Maclaren 64).

GOALS

0-1 Mitchell Duke showed rare intelligence to score with a fabulous flicked header to guide home a deflected cross from Craig Goodwin.

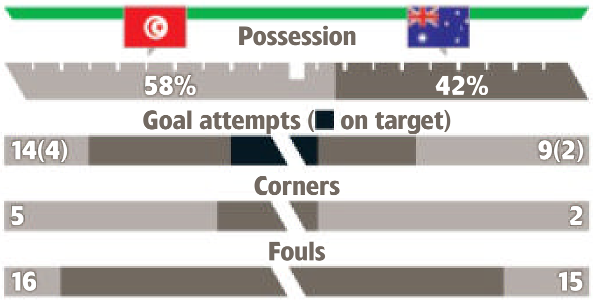
Fabulous header
...Mitchell Duke

SOCCEROOS SCRAP VITAL VICTORY

Australia knew that defeat would knock them out of the tournament, but repelled constant second-half pressure from Tunisia to scramble a joyfully celebrated win. Mitchell Duke's clever first-half header gave Australia an advantage that was protected by a stubborn defence led by Harry Souttar. In front of a raucous contingent of support, the Tunisians could not match the verve they had displayed in their opening group match against Denmark and struggled to get their game going in the first half. But they came desperately close to an equaliser in the second period when Socceroos keeper Mathew Ryan denied Youssef Msakni and Wahbi Khazri, while Australia went close themselves when Mat Leckie agonisingly failed to reach Jamie Maclaren's low cross.

MATTER OF FACT

This was the first time the Socceroos had ever led a World Cup match at half-time.



GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FRANCE	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
AUSTRALIA	3	2	0	1	3	4	6
TUNISIA	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
DENMARK	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 4PM

FRANCE (0) 2
(Mbappe 61, 86)

DENMARK (0) 1
(Christensen 68)

Stadium 974, Doha
Att: 42,860 Ref: Marciniak (Pol)

FRANCE Lloris; Kounde, Varane (Konate 75), Upamecano, T. Hernandez; Tchouameni, Rabiot; Dembele (Coman 75), Griezmann (Fofana 90+3), Mbappe; Giroud (Thuram 62).
🟨 Kounde

DENMARK Schmeichel; Andersen, Christensen, Nelsson; Kristensen (Bah 90+2), Hojbjerg, Eriksen, Maehle; Lindstrom (Norgaard 85), Damsgaard (Dolberg 73); Cornelius (Braithwaite 46).
🟨 Christensen, Cornelius

GOALS

1-0 Mbappe expertly pokes home from close range, converting a cut-back by Theo Hernandez.
1-1 Andreas Christensen heads home at the back post after Joachim Andersen flicks on a right-wing corner by Christian Eriksen.
2-1 A cross from Antoine Griezmann is chested home by the irrepressible Mbappe.

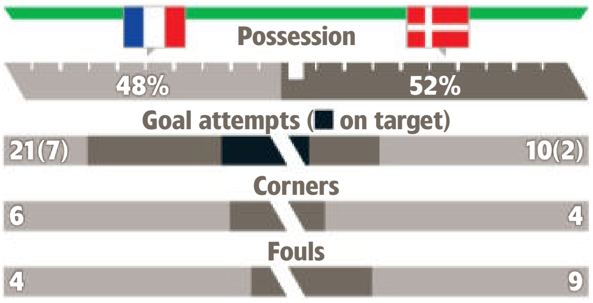
Star of the show...Mbappe

KYLIAN SHOWS KILLER INSTINCT

France qualified for the knockout stages with a match to spare after victory in a tough, tight game. The speed, intelligence and goalscoring prowess of Kylian Mbappe was the difference. His pace tormented the Danish defence, and his second late goal was decisive. Denmark were much improved on their opening game and, after Andreas Christensen's equaliser, they missed a big chance at 1-1 with sub Martin Braithwaite shaving the post with his shot.

MATTER OF FACT

Kylian Mbappe's double meant he took his World Cup goals tally to seven by the age of 24, a figure that equals Pele's record.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 3PM

AUSTRALIA (0) 1
(Leckie 60)

DENMARK (0) 0

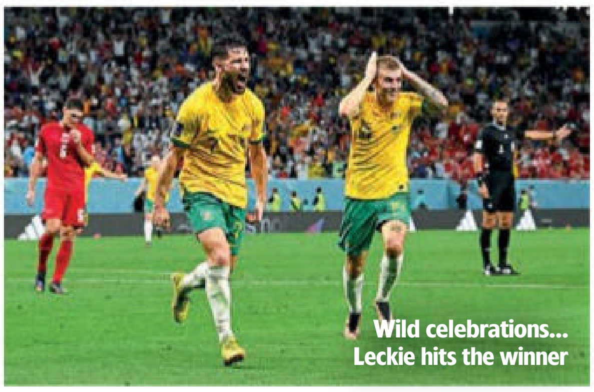
Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah
Att: 41,232 Ref: Ghorbal (Alg)

AUSTRALIA Ryan; Degenek, Souttar, Rowles, Behich; Leckie (Hrustic 89), Mooy, Irvine, Goodwin (Baccus 46); McGree (Wright 74), Duke (Maclaren 82).
🟨 Behich, Degenek

DENMARK Schmeichel; Kristensen (Bah 46), Andersen, Christensen, Maehle (Cornelius 70); Jensen (Damsgaard 59), Hojbjerg, Eriksen; Skov Olsen (Skov 69), Lindstrom; Braithwaite (Dolberg 59).
🟨 Skov

GOALS

1-0 A swift counter-attack from a corner by Australia allows Mathew Leckie freedom to run at the Danish defence and score with a precise, low shot past Kasper Schmeichel.



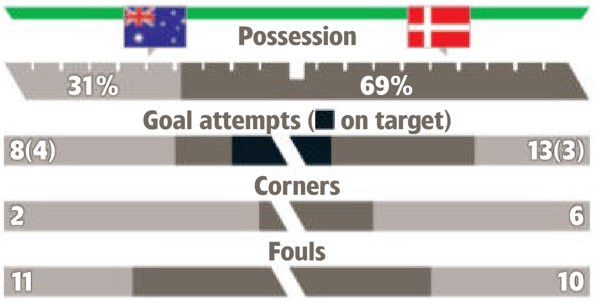
Wild celebrations... Leckie hits the winner

ORGANISED AUSSIES PROGRESS

Australia's excellent organisation, unceasing energy and robust defence fashioned a victory that clinched second place in the group. After a bright opening spell from Denmark, there was little doubt the Aussies would finish with smiles on their faces and the win they needed to progress. The goal was cleverly worked, and then Graham Arnold's side held firm with ease. Denmark had entered the tournament with high optimism, but here they were timid, nervous and complacent. Even when the referee awarded them a penalty it was overturned because Kasper Dolberg had been offside when fouled.

MATTER OF FACT

Australia moved into the knockout stages for only the second time in their history after doing so at the 2006 tournament in Germany.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 3PM

TUNISIA (0) 1
(Khazri 58)

FRANCE (0) 0

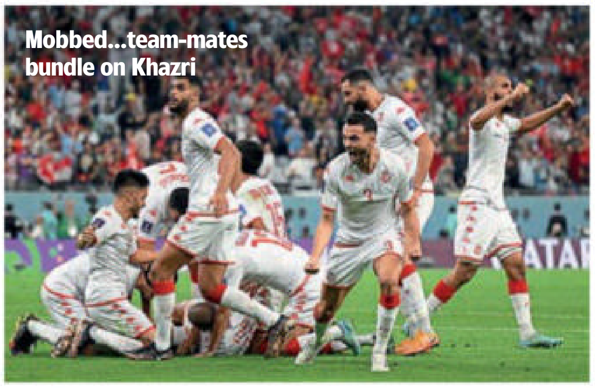
Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 43,627 Ref: Conger (Nzl)

TUNISIA Dahmen; Meriah, Ghandri, Talbi; Kechrida, Skhiri, Laidouni, Maaloul; Ben Slimane (Abdi 83), Ben Romdhane (Chaaleli 74); Khazri (Jebali 59).
🟨 Kechrida

FRANCE Mandanda; Disasi, Varane (Saliba 63), Konate, Camavinga; Fofana (Griezmann 73), Tchouameni, Veretout (Rabiot 63); Coman (Mbappe 63), Kolo Muani, Guendouzi (Dembele 79).

GOALS

1-0 Tunisia's captain Wahbi Khazri makes space for himself on the edge of the box and fires home a low shot for an historic strike.



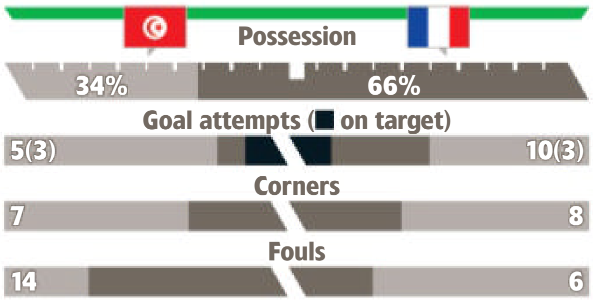
Mobbed...team-mates bundle on Khazri

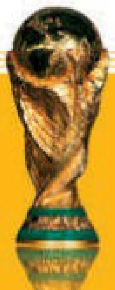
TUNISIA GO OUT ON A HIGH

France fielded a second-string side and paid the price as they lost to an inspired Tunisian team who once again showed their spirit and quality. The win could have been by a wider margin, with defender Nader Ghandri having his first-half volley ruled out for offside. Victory was not quite enough for the North Africans to reach the knockout stages, but they left a bold impression. After two excellent wins, this was a concern for France, suggesting a lack of reserve strength at the disposal of head coach Didier Deschamps. Even when Kyllian Mbappe and the big guns arrived off the bench they could not change the outcome. A late strike by Antoine Griezmann was ruled out by VAR.

MATTER OF FACT

This was a first defeat for France at a World Cup tournament since losing 1-0 to Germany in the 2014 quarter-finals – ten games ago.





GROUP E

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1PM

GERMANY (1) 1
(Gundogan 33 pen)

JAPAN (0) 2
(Doan 75, Asano 83)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 42,608 Ref: Barton (Slv)

GERMANY Neuer; Sule, Rudiger, Schlotterbeck, Raum; Kimmich, Gundogan (Goretzka 67); Gnabry (Moukoko 90), Muller (Hofmann 67), Musiala (Gotze 79); Havertz (Fullkrug 79).

JAPAN Gonda; Sakai (Minamino 74), Itakura, Yoshida, Nagatomo (Mitoma 57); Endo, Tanaka (Doan 71); J. Ito, Kamada, Kubo (Tomiyasu 46); Maeda (Asano 57).

GOALS

1-0 Shuichi Gonda clumsily brings down David Raum, and Gundogan slots home the penalty.
1-1 Neuer pushes Minamino's effort back into the red zone, and Ritsu Doan nets the rebound.
1-2 Takuma Asano wonderfully controls a high long ball, accelerates away from the defender and sensationally finishes from a tight angle.

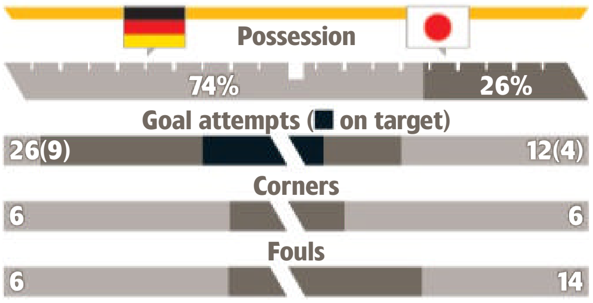
Dramatic finale ...Asano buries the winner

JAPANESE SUBS STUN GERMANS

As pro-active and lively after the restart as they were tentative prior to the break, Japan came from behind to secure their first-ever win against Germany. The *Nationalmannschaft* were left stunned. For long spells, they were in control and had several chances to extend their lead. Japan boss Hajime Moriyasu has a reputation for a conservative approach, but he certainly was brave in his second-half personnel calls, with two of his substitutes, Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano, netting in the final 15 minutes to sensationally turn the match on its head.

MATTER OF FACT

Germany substitute Youssoufa Moukoko became his country's youngest-ever World Cup player aged 18 years and three days.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 4PM

SPAIN (3) 7
(Olmo 11, Asensio 21, F. Torres 31 pen, 54, Gavi 74, Soler 90, Morata 90+2)

COSTA RICA (0) 0

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha
Att: 40,013 Ref: Abdulla (UAE)

SPAIN Simon; Azpilicueta, Rodri, Laporte, Alba (Balde 64); Gavi, Busquets (Koke 64), Pedri (Soler 57); F. Torres (Morata 57), Asensio (Williams 69), Olmo.

COSTA RICA Navas; Martinez (Waston 46), Duarte, Calvo, Oviedo (Matarrita 82); Fuller, Borges (Aguilera 72), Tejeda, Bennette (Ruiz 61); Campbell, Contreras (Zamora 61).
🟨 Calvo, Campbell

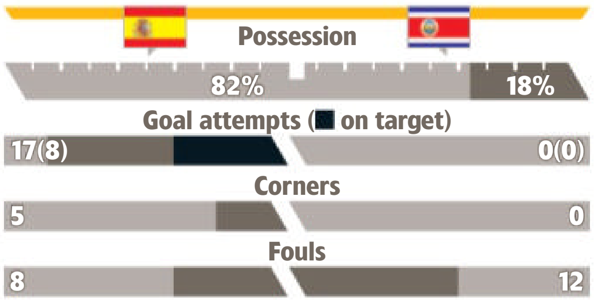
GOALS

1-0 Dani Olmo swivels after latching on to a deflected Gavi pass and dinks it over Navas.
2-0 Asensio fires Alba's cross home first time.
3-0 Ferran Torres scores a penalty "Jorginho-style" after Oscar Duarte impedes Jordi Alba.
4-0 Torres gets his second goal after some hesitant defending in the Costa Rican area.
5-0 Gavi scores a virtuoso outside-of-the-foot volley from Alvaro Morata's curled cross.
6-0 Soler follows in Navas' weak palm out.
7-0 Morata finishes after a one-two with Olmo.

Top technique... Gavi's virtuoso finish

LA ROJA RUN RIOT

A brilliant Spanish XI had the ball on a string in this most one-sided of World Cup duels. From first to last, *La Roja* passed the hapless *Ticos* to death. Even if Costa Rica were abject – devoid of defensive discipline, ideas and conviction – this was a stunning statement of intent from Spain, whose movement, fluidity, speed of execution and cutting edge were of the highest order. Amidst the feast of attractive football served up, one highlight stood out - Gavi, just 18 years and 110 days old, is now the youngest player to score at a World Cup since Pele in 1958.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 10AM

JAPAN (0) 0

COSTA RICA (0) 1
(Fuller 81)

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 41,479 Ref: Oliver (Eng)

JAPAN Gonda; Yamane (Mitoma 62), Itakura, Yoshida, Nagatomo (H. Ito 46); Endo, Morita; Doan (J. Ito 67), Kamada, Soma (Minamino 82); Ueda (Asano 46).
🟨 Yamane, Itakura, Endo

COSTA RICA Navas; Fuller, Duarte, Waston, Calvo, Oviedo; Torres (Aguilera 65), Borges (Salas 89), Tejeda, Campbell (Chacon 90+5); Contreras (Bennette 65).
🟨 Contreras, Borges, Calvo

GOALS

0-1 Hidemasa Morita loses possession on the edge of Japan's box. Yeltsin Tejeda finds Keysher Fuller, who lets fly with a left-footed curler aimed for the top corner. Shuichi Gonda seems to jump early and, though he gets a weak hand to it, he cannot prevent the shot reaching its destination.

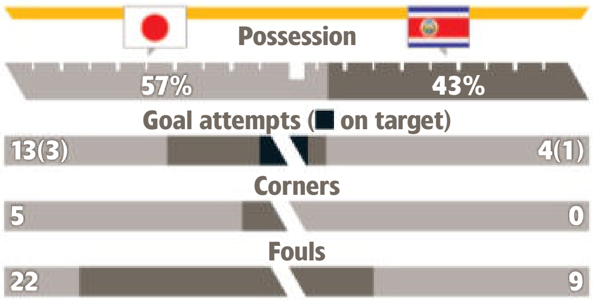
Winner...Fuller scores from the edge of the box

SMASH-AND-GRAB WIN FOR LOS TICOS

Costa Rica spent virtually the whole game on the back foot before flooring the territorially dominant Japanese with a late sucker punch. Keen to make amends for their 7-0 thumping by Spain, they gave a much-improved defensive display against Japan. Talk about efficiency... Fuller's goal was Costa Rica's only shot on target in the entire match. Japan, fresh from their shock giantkilling of Germany, badly let themselves down, disjointed, short of final-third invention and woeful at attacking set-pieces.

MATTER OF FACT

This was Costa Rica's first win at a World Cup in normal time since beating Italy in the group phase in 2014 – a run of eight games.



GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
JAPAN	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
SPAIN	3	1	1	1	9	3	4
GERMANY	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
COSTA RICA	3	1	0	2	3	11	3

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 7PM

SPAIN (0) 1

(Morata 62)

GERMANY (0) 1

(Fullkrug 83)

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor
Att: 68,895 Ref: Makkelie (Ned)

SPAIN Simon; Carvajal, Rodri, Laporte, Alba (Balde 82); Gavi (Williams 66), Busquets, Pedri; F. Torres (Morata 54), Asensio (Koke 66), Olmo.
🟨 Busquets

GERMANY Neuer; Kehrer (Klostermann 70), Sule, Rudiger, Raum (Schlotterbeck 87); Kimmich, Goretzka; Gnabry (Hofmann 85), Gundogan (Sane 70), Musiala; Muller (Fullkrug 70).
🟨 Kehrer, Goretzka, Kimmich

GOALS

1-0 Jordi Alba crosses low from the left flank and Alvaro Morata nips ahead of Niklas Sule to flick it home with the outside of his right foot.
1-1 Leroy Sane plays a through pass to Jamal Musiala, who spins, and Niclas Fullkrug takes over by hammering a rising shot past Simon.

Mercurial...teenage talent Jamal Musiala

NUMBER NINES MAKE THEIR IMPACT

Niclas Fullkrug, pigeon-holed as a journeyman striker, proved to be Germany's saviour, coming off the bench to thump in the equaliser. Spain, who took the lead through another substitute, Alvaro Morata, were left to bemoan a lack of killer instinct, especially when Marco Asensio skied a great opportunity to make it 2-0. Full marks to the Germans for the character they showed, and the tone set by the mercurial teenage midfielder Jamal Musiala, whose quick feet, strength on the ball and elusive runs were a constant source of menace to the Spaniards.

MATTER OF FACT

Fullkrug, 29, who made his debut in a World Cup warm-up match, is the oldest outfield player to make his Germany bow for 20 years.

Spain		Germany
64%	Possession	36%
7(3)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	11(4)
6	Corners	5
13	Fouls	11

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 7PM

JAPAN (0) 2

(Doan 48, Tanaka 51)

SPAIN (1) 1

(Morata 11)

Khalifa International Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 44,851 Ref: Gomes (RSA)

JAPAN Gonda; Itakura, Yoshida, Taniguchi; J. Ito, Tanaka (Endo 87), Morita, Nagatomo (Mitoma 46); Kubo (Doan 46), Maeda (Asano 62), Kamada (Tomiyasu 69).
🟨 Itakura, Taniguchi, Yoshida

SPAIN Simon; Azpilicueta (Carvajal 46), Rodri, P. Torres, Balde (Alba 68); Gavi (Fati 68), Busquets, Pedri; Williams (F. Torres 57), Morata (Asensio 57), Olmo.

GOALS

0-1 Cesar Azpilicueta has time to deliver a cross and an unmarked Alvaro Morata heads in.
1-1 Following a fierce high press, Junya Ito forces a turnover deep in the Spanish half and the ball falls to substitute Ritsu Doan, who scores with a powerful left-footed drive.
2-1 Kaoru Mitoma hooks back Doan's low cross and Ao Tanaka bundles the ball in. Had the ball crossed the by-line before Mitoma centred? After a lengthy check, VAR deemed no.

Controversial... over the line or not?

JAPAN REPEAT HISTORIC GIANTKILLING

Eight days after coming from behind to beat Germany, Japan pulled off another remarkable rally to roar back and claim the scalp of much-fancied Spain. It looks as though Samurai Blue have settled on a highly-effective underdog gameplan: play timidly in the first half, lull the opposition into a false sense of security, freshen themselves up with clever substitutions, and then strike like a cobra to turn it all around.

MATTER OF FACT

Japan are only the third team in World Cup history (after Brazil in 1938 and West Germany in 1970) to be losing at half-time and mount a winning comeback twice at the same finals.

Japan		Spain
18%	Possession	82%
6(3)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	12(5)
0	Corners	2
9	Fouls	6

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 7PM

COSTA RICA (0) 2

(Tejeda 58, Neuer 70 og)

GERMANY (1) 4

(Gnabry 10, Havertz 73, 85, Fullkrug 89)

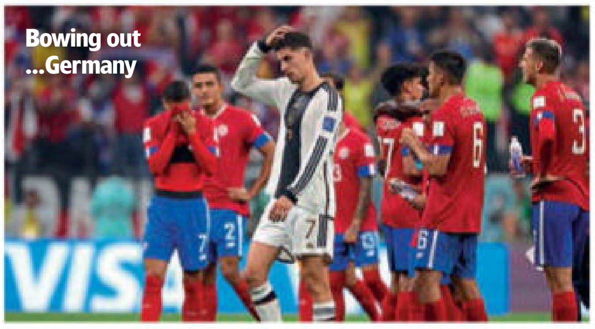
Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor
Att: 67,054 Ref: Frappart (Fra)

COSTA RICA Navas; Fuller (Bennette 74), Waston, Duarte, Vargas, Oviedo (Contreras 90+3); Campbell, Borges, Tejeda (Wilson 90+3), Aguilera (Salas 46); Venegas (Matarrita 74).
🟨 Duarte

GERMANY Neuer; Kimmich, Sule (Ginter 90+3), Rudiger, Raum (Gotze 67); Goretzka (Klostermann 46), Gundogan (Fullkrug 55); Sane, Musiala, Gnabry; Muller (Havertz 66).

GOALS

0-1 Raum crosses to the near post, where Gnabry guides a header into the far corner.
1-1 Neuer parries a Kendall Waston header and Yeltsin Tejeda picks up the pieces from close in.
2-1 In a melee following a free-kick, Juan Pablo Vargas pokes it home via a ricochet off Neuer.
2-2 Costa Rica fail to clear their lines, and Fullkrug flicks the ball to Havertz who converts.
2-3 From the right flank, Gnabry flashes a cross to the far post where Havertz taps in.
2-4 Sane chests it down for Fullkrug to fire in.



Bowing out ...Germany

GERMANY CRASH OUT IN GROUPS AGAIN

On a night of high drama and constant shifts of narrative, Germany went through the gamut of emotions: total superiority when bossing the first half, complacently allowing Costa Rica to turn the tables, then fighting back to grab the three points late on. All to no avail. Japan's defeat of Spain inflicted consecutive World Cup group-stage eliminations on the *Nationalmannschaft*.

MATTER OF FACT

After fourth official duties earlier in the finals, Stephanie Frappart became the first female to take charge of a game at the men's World Cup.

Costa Rica		Germany
32%	Possession	68%
7(5)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	32(11)
1	Corners	14
3	Fouls	9

GROUP F

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 10AM

MOROCCO (0) 0

CROATIA (0) 0

Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor
Att: 59,407 Ref: Rapallini (Arg)

MOROCCO Bounou; Hakimi, Aguerd, Saiss, Mazraoui (Attiat Allah 60); Ounahi (Sabiri 82), Amrabat, Amallah; Ziyech, En-Nesyri (Hamdallah 82), Boufal (Ezzalzouli 65).
🟨 Amrabat

CROATIA Livakovic; Juranovic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Sosa; Modric, Brozovic, Kovacic (Majer 79); Vlasic (Pasalic 46), Kramaric (Livaja 71), Perisic (Orsic 90).

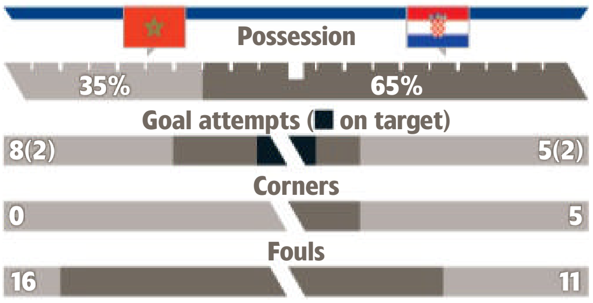
Tight tussle... Vlasic and Boufal

ENGAGING BUT GOALLESS AFFAIR

In their first-ever competitive meeting, 2018 World Cup runners-up Croatia and the Atlas Lions of Morocco proved that goalless draws need not be dull, even if the outcome was never in doubt. Both sides lacked a cutting edge in the final third and excelled in obdurate and physical defending. Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou kept out Nikola Vlasic's close-range attempt from Borna Sosa's cross in the first half, while his Croatian counterpart Dominik Livakovic blocked Noussair Mazraoui's header after the break. The intensity and pace of the match dropped in the second half but there were still a few goalmouth scrambles, while the well-drilled Moroccans went close when right-back Achraf Hakimi stung the hands of Livakovic with the Croatia keeper punching away his speculative long-range free-kick.

MATTER OF FACT

Four Croatia players who played in the 2018 World Cup final defeat to France started this match – Marcelo Brozovic, Dejan Lovren, Ivan Perisic and captain Luka Modric.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 7PM

BELGIUM (1) 1
(Batshuayi 44)

CANADA (0) 0

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 40,432 Ref: Sikazwe (Zam)

BELGIUM Courtois; Dendoncker, Alderweireld, Vertonghen; Castagne, Tielemans (Onana 46), Witsel, Carrasco (Meunier 46); De Bruyne, E. Hazard (Trossard 62), Batshuayi (Openda 78).
🟨 Carrasco, Meunier, Onana

CANADA Borjan; Johnston, Vitoria, Miller; Laryea (Adekugbe 74), Hutchinson (Kone 58), Eustaquio (Osorio 81), Davies; Buchanan (Millar 81), Hoilett (Larin 58), David.
🟨 Davies, Johnston

GOALS

1-0 Against the run of play, Michy Batshuayi steals a yard on his marker following a long ball by Toby Alderweireld and nets a cool half-volley.

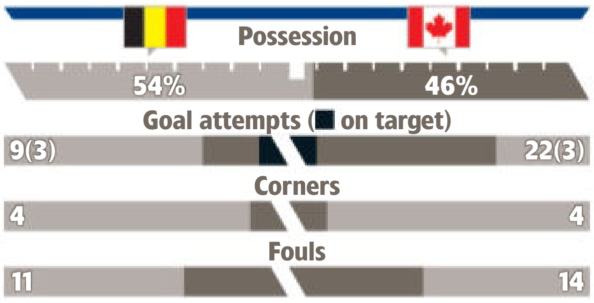
Crucial...Courtois saves Davies' penalty

DYNAMIC BUT PROFLIGATE CANADIANS

Belgium had six players aged over 30 in their starting XI and the contrast with Canada was enormous, whose youngsters – as well as Richie Laryea's high-tempo, helter-skelter running, quick transitions and pressing – had Belgium pinned back in their own half. But the Canadians failed to maintain that intensity after the break. Just three of Canada's 22 attempts were on target. Their attack was too profligate to scare the world's best goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who made a crucial save from Alphonso Davies' weak first-half penalty.

MATTER OF FACT

Canada took their tally of World Cup games without scoring a goal to four, leaving China, Trinidad & Tobago and DR Congo (then known as Zaire in 1974) in their wake.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1PM

BELGIUM (0) 0

MOROCCO (0) 2
(Saiss 73, Aboukhlal 90+2)

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha
Att: 43,738 Ref: Ramos (Mex)

BELGIUM Courtois; Meunier (Lukaku 81), Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Castagne; Onana (Tielemans 60), Witsel; De Bruyne, E. Hazard (Mertens 60), T. Hazard (Trossard 75); Batshuayi (De Ketelaere 75).
🟨 Onana

MOROCCO Munir; Hakimi (Sabiri 67), Aguerd, Saiss, Mazraoui; Ounahi (El Yamiq 78), Amrabat, Amallah (Attiat Allah 67); Ziyech, En-Nesyri (Hamdallah 73), Boufal (Aboukhlal 73).
🟨 Sabiri

GOALS

0-1 Everybody expects a cross, but substitute Abdelhamid Sabiri whips his free-kick from a tight angle towards goal, where it glances off Romain Saiss and catches Courtois off guard.

0-2 Hakim Ziyech is the architect of Morocco's second, swerving away from Timothy Castagne and teeing up Zakaria Aboukhlal, who cleverly guides it into the top corner at the near post.

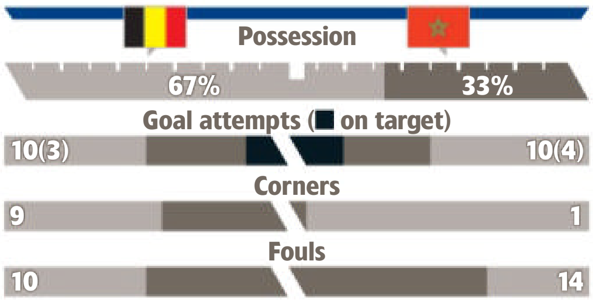
Supersub...Aboukhlal seals the points

BELGIANS ON THE BRINK

After riding their luck against Canada, Belgium produced an even more dire display, aided by an error from Thibaut Courtois. The usually reliable keeper was warned when he conceded straight from Ziyech's wide free-kick – only to be saved by an offside VAR call – and Morocco repeated the trick in the second half. Walid Regragui made some inspired subs, with Sabiri and Aboukhlal integral in causing another World Cup upset.

MATTER OF FACT

This was Morocco's first World Cup victory for 24 years. In 1998, they defeated Scotland 3-0 but did not progress from the group stage.



	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MOROCCO	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
CROATIA	3	1	2	0	4	1	5
BELGIUM	3	1	1	1	1	2	4
CANADA	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

GROUP F

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 4PM

CROATIA (2) 4
(Kramaric 36, 70, Livaja 44, Majer 90+4)

CANADA (1) 1
(Davies 2)

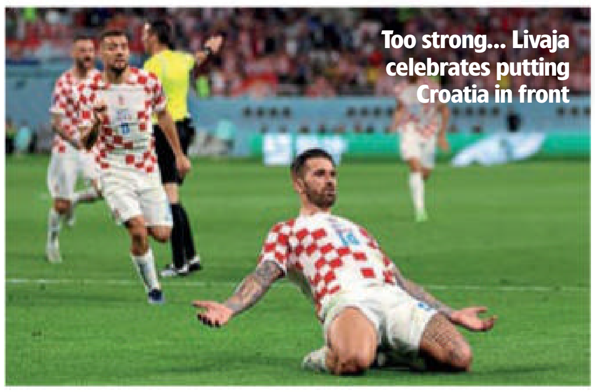
Khalifa International Stadium, Doha
Att: 44,374 Ref: Matonte (Uru)

CROATIA Livakovic; Juranovic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Sosa; Modric (Pasalic 86), Brozovic, Kovacic (Majer 86); Kramaric (Vlasic 73), Livaja (Petkovic 60), Perisic (Orsic 86).
🟨 Lovren, Modric

CANADA Borjan; Johnston, Vitoria, Miller, Laryea (Hoilett 62); Buchanan, Hutchinson (Adekugbe 74), Eustaquio (Kone 46), Davies; David (Cavallini 72), Larin (Osorio 46).
🟨 Buchanan, Miller

GOALS

0-1 Davies' header from a Tajon Buchanan cross provides Canada with a dream start.
1-1 Following neat interplay on the left channel, Andrej Kramaric slots in from an acute angle.
2-1 A Josip Juranovic foray allows Marko Livaja to sweetly pick his spot from the edge of the box.
3-1 Kramaric strikes again, finding the bottom corner after some lax Canadian defending.
4-1 A horror show from Canada centre-back Kamal Miller allows Mislav Orsic and Lovro Majer to race away and complete the victory.

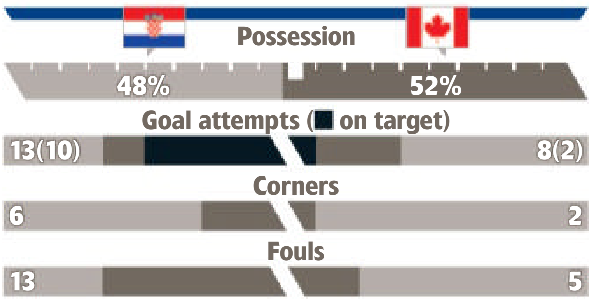

Too strong... Livaja celebrates putting Croatia in front

CROATS OUTCLASS CANADA

John Herdman's team began on the front foot, but showed naivety as Croatia's experience and cunning prevailed. A hard reality check for the Canadians, co-hosts of the 2026 World Cup.

MATTER OF FACT

Alphonso Davies' header was Canada's first-ever World Cup goal. At the 1986 World Cup, Canada failed to score in a group containing France, Hungary and the Soviet Union.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 3PM

CANADA (1) 1
(Aguerd 40 og)

MOROCCO (2) 2
(Ziyech 4, En-Nesyri 23)

Al Thumama Stadium, Doha
Att: 43,102 Ref: Claus (Bra)

CANADA Borjan; Johnston, Vitoria, Miller, Adekugbe (Kone 61); Davies, Osorio (Laryea 65), Kaye (Hutchinson 60), Buchanan; Hoilett (Wotherspoon 76); Larin (David 60).
🟨 Hoilett, Osorio, Adekugbe, Vitoria

MOROCCO Bounou; Hakimi (Jabrane 85), Aguerd, Saiss, Mazraoui; Ounahi (El Yamiq 77), Amrabat, Sabiri (Amallah 65); Ziyech (Hamdallah 76), En-Nesyri, Boufal (Aboukhlal 65).

GOALS

0-1 Calamitous play by Milan Borjan gifts Hakim Ziyech a goal, who deftly chips the out-of-position goalkeeper from 30 yards.
0-2 An excellent strike by Youssef En-Nesyri, who scores running onto a speculative long ball down the right channel by Achraf Hakimi.
1-2 Nayef Aguerd scores the first own goal of the finals, deflecting a low Sam Adekugbe cross into his own net at the near post.

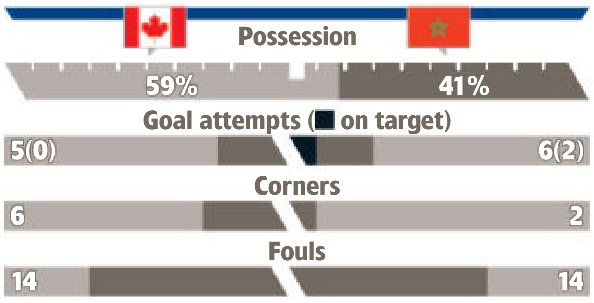
Are you watching?... En-Nesyri's celebration

MOROCCO REPEAT HEROICS OF 1986

For only the second time, Morocco progressed to the knockout stages. They were improbable but deserved winners of Group F, and this win was the icing on the cake. In a close match, the North Africans were happy to sit back and soak up pressure after going ahead – and it almost cost them when Atiba Hutchinson's second-half header hit the crossbar and came agonisingly close to crossing the goal-line on its way down.

MATTER OF FACT

In a repeat of the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, Morocco topped their group, while Canada lost all three of their group-stage games.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 3PM

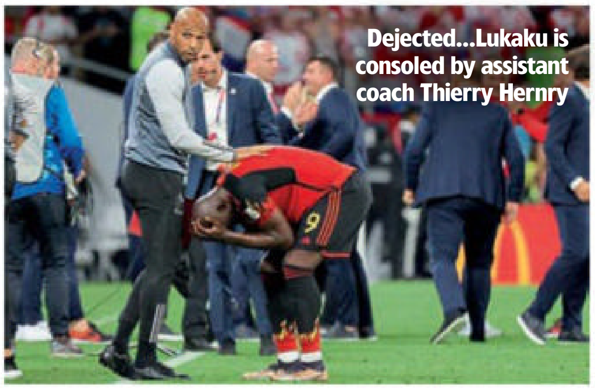
CROATIA (0) 0

BELGIUM (0) 0

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 43,984 Ref: Taylor (Eng)

CROATIA Livakovic; Juranovic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Sosa; Modric, Brozovic, Kovacic (Majer 90+2); Kramaric (Pasalic 64), Livaja (Petkovic 64), Perisic.

BELGIUM Courtois; Meunier (E. Hazard 87), Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Castagne; Dendoncker (Tielemans 72), Witsel; De Bruyne, Mertens (Lukaku 46), Carrasco (Doku 72); Trossard (T. Hazard 59).
🟨 Dendoncker

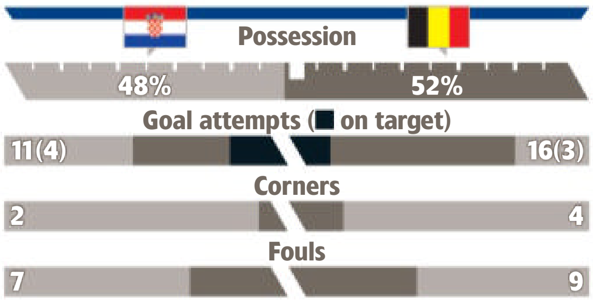

Dejected...Lukaku is consoled by assistant coach Thierry Hernry

END OF BELGIUM'S GOLDEN GENERATION

Belgium went from third at the World Cup in 2018 to third in their group in 2022, leaving a tarnished legacy for their golden generation. Their premature exit prompted Roberto Martinez to step down immediately in the aftermath of the defeat, six years after taking charge. Romelu Lukaku, clearly lacking match sharpness, was blamed for a series of misses in the second half, but at least he had shown determination and commitment, qualities lacking across the team amid rumours of fractures and bust-ups in the dressing room. In a largely forgettable game, Croatia had a penalty overturned by VAR due to an offside by the narrowest of margins in the first half, before a rearguard action from Zlatko Dalic's side denied Belgium and Lukaku at the end. Centre-back Josko Gvardiol was in imperious form, making a match-saving interception to help seal his nation's progress.

MATTER OF FACT

This is Belgium's worst World Cup finish since 1998, where they also departed in the group stage after lacklustre draws with Netherlands, South Korea and Mexico.



GROUP G

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 10AM

SWITZERLAND (0) 1
(Embolo 48)

CAMEROON (0) 0

Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah
Att: 39,089 Ref: Tello (Arg)

SWITZERLAND Sommer; Widmer, Akanji, Elvedi, Rodriguez (Comert 90); Freuler, Xhaka; Shaqiri (Okafor 72), Sow (Frei 72), Vargas (Rieder 81); Embolo (Seferovic 72).
🟨 Elvedi, Akanji

CAMEROON Onana; Fai, Castelletto, Nkoulou, Nouhou; Zambo Anguissa, Oum Gouet, Hongla (Ondoua 68); Mbeumo (Ngamaleu 81), Choupo-Moting (Aboubakar 74), Toko Ekambi (Nkoudou 74).
🟨 Fai

GOALS

1-0 A swift Swiss move carves Cameroon open and culminates in Breel Embolo clinically turning Xherdan Shaqiri's cross past Andre Onana.

Respect... Embolo chose not to celebrate his winning goal

EMBOLO BREAKS CAMEROONIAN HEARTS

Both sides had periods of control in the first half, but Cameroon had the more promising openings with each of their front three getting a sight of goal. Despite this, defences remained on top going into the break with Manuel Akanji heading Switzerland's best chance wide before half-time. The Swiss re-emerged for the second half transformed and took just three minutes to go ahead. They weren't able to extend their lead though, as Andre Onana and Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa made vital interventions to keep their side in the game. Jean-Charles Castelletto added another superb block to deny Haris Seferovic late on, but Cameroon couldn't carve out a leveller.

MATTER OF FACT

Breel Embolo didn't celebrate his goal having been born in the Cameroonian capital, Yaounde.

Switzerland		Cameroon
51%	Possession	49%
7(3)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	8(5)
11	Corners	5
12	Fouls	10

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 7PM

BRAZIL (0) 2
(Richarlison 62, 73)

SERBIA (0) 0

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail
Att: 88,103 Ref: Faghani (Irn)

BRAZIL Alisson; Danilo, Thiago Silva, Marquinhos, Alex Sandro; Paqueta (Fred 75), Casemiro; Raphinha (Martinelli 87), Neymar (Antony 80), Vinicius Junior (Rodrygo 76); Richarlison (Jesus 79).

SERBIA V. Milinkovic-Savic; Milenkovic, Veljkovic, Pavlovic; Zivkovic (Radonjic 57), Lukic (Lazovic 66), Gudelj (Ilic 57), Mladenovic (Vlahovic 66); Tadic, S. Milinkovic-Savic; A. Mitrovic (Maksimovic 83).
🟨 Pavlovic, Gudelj, Lukic

GOALS

1-0 Richarlison is quickest to react when Vanja Milinkovic-Savic saves Vinicius Junior's shot, and pokes the ball home from close range.
2-0 An astounding acrobatic effort from Richarlison leaves Milinkovic-Savic helpless.

Acrobatic finish... Richarlison's worldie

RICHARLISON BRACE BEATS SERBIA

Supporters in Lusail had to wait over an hour for their samba party, as Serbia disrupted the game's rhythm by standing toe-to-toe with the Brazilians. There were flashes of brilliance from *A Selecao*, although Vanja Milinkovic-Savic beat Vinicius Junior to Thiago Silva's defence-splitting pass, while a scintillating move ended in a tame Raphinha shot. Even when Nikola Milenkovic messed up his clearance, the big centre-back recovered to deny Vinicius Junior. In the second period, after Alex Sandro's long-range effort smashed the post, Richarlison struck twice to put Brazil in a strong position, allowing Tite's substitutes to come on and express themselves.

MATTER OF FACT

Brazil haven't lost their opening game at the World Cup since doing so against Yugoslavia and Spain in 1930 and 1934 respectively.

Brazil		Serbia
59%	Possession	41%
22(8)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	5(0)
6	Corners	4
7	Fouls	14

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 10AM

CAMEROON (1) 3
(Castelletto 29, Aboubakar 63, Choupo-Moting 66)

SERBIA (2) 3
(Pavlovic 45+1, S. Milinkovic-Savic 45+3, A. Mitrovic 53)

Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah
Att: 39,789 Ref: Abdulla (UAE)

CAMEROON Epassy; Fai, Castelletto, Nkoulou, Nouhou; Zambo Anguissa (Oum Gouet 81), Hongla (Aboubakar 55), Kunde (Ondoua 67); Mbeumo (Nkoudou 81), Choupo-Moting, Toko Ekambi (Bassogog 67).
🟨 Nkoulou, Bassogog

SERBIA V. Milinkovic-Savic; Milenkovic, Veljkovic (Babic 78), Pavlovic (S. Mitrovic 56); Zivkovic (Radonjic 78), Maksimovic, Lukic, Kostic (Djuricic 90+1); Tadic, S. Milinkovic-Savic (Grujic 79); A. Mitrovic.
🟨 Jovic, Milenkovic

GOALS

1-0 Jean-Charles Castelletto sneaks in at the back post to convert Pierre Kunde's corner.
1-1 Strahinja Pavlovic's header from Dusan Tadic's floated free-kick finds the far corner.
1-2 Sergej Milinkovic-Savic links up with Andrija Zivkovic before striking from the edge of the box.
1-3 A sweeping Serbian move culminates in a simple finish for Aleksandar Mitrovic.
2-3 Vincent Aboubakar beats the offside trap and audaciously scoops the ball over the goalie.
3-3 Sub Aboubakar gets through again and selflessly tees up Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting.

Audacious ...Aboubakar's scooped lob

SIX-GOAL THRILLER ENDS ALL SQUARE

Andre Onana's omission from Cameroon's squad was the big pre-match story and Aleksandar Mitrovic will be frustrated not to have beaten his replacement, Devis Epassy, more than once. After Serbia came from behind to lead, Vincent Aboubakar emerged from the bench to inspire Cameroon to a vital draw in a remarkable match.

MATTER OF FACT

Cameroon ended a run of eight consecutive defeats at World Cup finals with this result.

Cameroon		Serbia
41%	Possession	59%
13(8)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	15(5)
4	Corners	3
8	Fouls	13

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
BRAZIL	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
SWITZERLAND	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
CAMEROON	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
SERBIA	3	0	1	2	5	8	1

GROUP G

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 4PM

BRAZIL (0) 1
(Casemiro 83)

SWITZERLAND (0) 0

Stadium 974, Doha
Att: 43,649 Ref: Barton (Slv)

BRAZIL Alisson; Militao, Thiago Silva, Marquinhos, Alex Sandro (Alex Telles 86); Fred (Bruno Guimaraes 58), Casemiro, Paqueta (Rodrygo 46); Raphinha (Antony 73), Richarlison (Jesus 73), Vinicius Junior.
🟨 Fred

SWITZERLAND Sommer; Widmer (Frei 86), Akanji, Elvedi, Rodriguez; Freuler, Xhaka; Rieder (Steffen 59), Sow (Aebischer 76), Vargas (Fernandes 59); Embolo (Seferovic 76).
🟨 Rieder

GOALS

1-0 After some lovely build-up play, Casemiro hits a strike that takes the slightest flick off Manuel Akanji and flies past Yann Sommer.

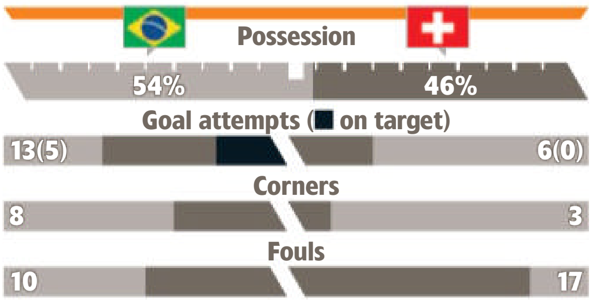
Disallowed...Vinicius Junior's goal was chalked off

CASEMIRO SINKS SWITZERLAND

The void left by Brazil's injured talisman Neymar was evident during a slow first half in which even the stadium lights dimmed early. Tite's men struggled to break down an organised Swiss side and while Raphinha tried to step up, the winger's cross was met with a tame Vinicius Junior shot before Yann Sommer comfortably saved his ambitious effort. After the interval, Vinicius Junior thought he'd opened the scoring when he skipped past Nico Elvedi and slid his shot into the bottom corner, but Richarlison had been caught offside in the build-up. Just when it looked like Switzerland would hold out, Casemiro took charge to fire in the winner.

MATTER OF FACT

Having not scored in his first 34 Brazil games, this was Casemiro's sixth goal in the following 33.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 7PM

CAMEROON (0) 1
(Aboubakar 90+2)

BRAZIL (0) 0

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail
Att: 85,986 Ref: Elfath (USA)

CAMEROON Epassy; Fai, Wooh, Ebosse, Nouhou; Kunde (Ntcham 68), Zambo Anguissa; Mbeumo (Toko Ekambi 64), Choupo-Moting, Ngamaleu (Ngom 86); Aboubakar.
🟨 Nouhou, Kunde, Fai, Aboubakar 🟥 Aboubakar

BRAZIL Ederson; Dani Alves, Militao, Bremer, Alex Telles (Marquinhos 54); Fred (Bruno Guimaraes 55), Fabinho; Antony (Raphinha 79), Rodrygo (Everton Ribeiro 55), Martinelli; Jesus (Pedro 64).
🟨 Militao, Bruno Guimaraes

GOALS

1-0 Aboubakar peels off Bremer's shoulder to head Jerome Ngom's pinpoint cross past Ederson.

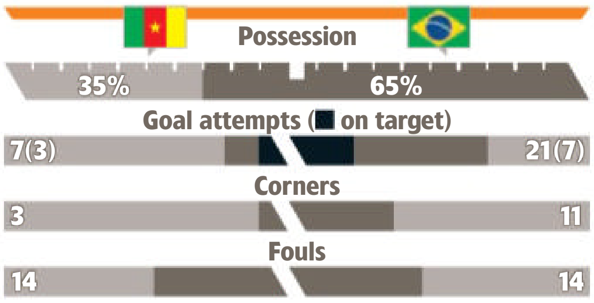
Marching orders... match-winner Vincent Aboubakar sees red

FIRST AFRICAN WIN VERSUS BRAZIL AT WC

Brazil boss Tite made nine changes with Antony and Gabriel Martinelli the two who tried to make things happen. Cameroon showed determination in their defending, although that tipped over to desperation at times. Devis Epassy's saves were unorthodox on occasions but kept Brazil out, while the Indomitable Lions showed a threat of their own through Bryan Mbeumo and Vincent Aboubakar's efforts either side of half-time. After Epassy denied Martinelli and Eder Militao, Christopher Wooh got across to ensure Bruno Guimaraes didn't get a clear shot on goal from Raphinha's cut-back. All of that defending paid off as Aboubakar headed in a late winner, a moment more than worth the second yellow for his celebration as Cameroon held on.

MATTER OF FACT

Dani Alves became Brazil's oldest-ever captain at a World Cup aged 39 years and 210 days.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 7PM

SERBIA (2) 2
(A. Mitrovic 26, Vlahovic 35)

SWITZERLAND (2) 3
(Shaqiri 20, Embolo 44, Freuler 48)

Stadium 974, Doha
Att: 41,378 Ref: Rapallini (Arg)

SERBIA V. Milinkovic-Savic; Milenkovic, Veljkovic (Gudelj 55), Pavlovic; Zivkovic (Radonjic 78), Lukic, S. Milinkovic-Savic (Maksimovic 68), Kostic; Tadic (Djuricic 78); Vlahovic (Jovic 55), A. Mitrovic.
🟨 S. Milinkovic-Savic, Pavlovic, Rajkovic, Gudelj, A. Mitrovic, Milenkovic, Lukic

SWITZERLAND Kobel; Widmer, Schar, Akanji, Rodriguez; Freuler, Xhaka; Shaqiri (Zakaria 69), Sow (Fernandes 68), Vargas (Fassnacht 83); Embolo (Okafor 90+6).
🟨 Widmer, Vargas, Xhaka, Schar

GOALS

0-1 Djibril Sow selflessly tees up Xherdan Shaqiri, who fires home into the bottom corner.
1-1 Aleksandar Mitrovic expertly glances Dusan Tadic's cross inside the far post.
2-1 Tadic slips through Dusan Vlahovic, who beats Gregor Kobel with a finish across his body.
2-2 A move started by Shaqiri culminates in Embolo tapping home Silvan Widmer's low cross.
2-3 An exquisite Shaqiri dink and Ruben Vargas flick is matched by Remo Freuler's clinical finish.

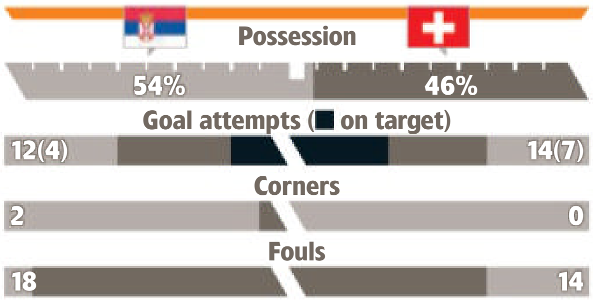
Heated...emotions boiling over

SWITZERLAND WIN FIERY CONTEST

Both teams showed intent from the start and had each enjoyed the feeling of going ahead by the 35th minute. Switzerland took control with a goal either side of half-time, which left Serbia visibly frustrated and approaching boiling point on multiple occasions. Switzerland were resolute when required, managing to maintain their lead despite Christian Fassnacht wasting a late chance.

MATTER OF FACT

The Serbians haven't made it out of the group stage in any of their last four World Cups.



GROUP H

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1PM

URUGUAY (0) 0

SOUTH KOREA (0) 0

Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 41,663 Ref: Turpin (Fra)

URUGUAY Rochet; Caceres, Godin, Gimenez, Olivera (Vina 79); Valverde, Bentancur, Vecino (De la Cruz 78); Pellistri (Varela 88), Suarez (Cavani 64), Nunez.
🟨 Caceres

SOUTH KOREA Kim Seung-gyu; Kim Moon-hwan, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su; Hwang In-beom, Jung Woo-young; Na Sang-ho (Lee Kang-in 75), Lee Jae-sung (Son Jun-ho 75), Son Heung-min; Hwang Ui-jo (Cho Gue-sung 75).
🟨 Cho Gue-sung

Passion...Valverde celebrates a tackle

KOREA AND URUGUAY ENDS IN STALEMATE

Underdogs South Korea asserted themselves in the early stages with Na Sang-ho looking bright down the right. Having helped repel the Asian outfit's advances, Jose Maria Gimenez took a key role in moving Uruguay forward, playing sweeping passes that found Federico Valverde and Facundo Pellistri in dangerous positions. The teams had one big chance apiece before the break, but Hwang Ui-jo skied his effort before Diego Godin's header struck the post. While the Taeguk Warriors offered little in attack for large periods after the break, they showed defensive discipline to limit Uruguay. There was a scare when Kim Min-jae's slip allowed Darwin Nunez in behind, but Kim Seung-gyu held his pull-back. The best chances came late as Cho Gue-sung pulled his effort wide, Valverde's thunderbolt hit the post, then Son Heung-min fired wide.

MATTER OF FACT

This was only Facundo Pellistri's second competitive match against senior opposition this season, following Manchester United U21s' 2-1 EFL Trophy win against Barrow.

	Possession	
56%		44%
	Goal attempts (■ on target)	
10(1)		7(0)
	Corners	
4		3
	Fouls	
7		10

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 4PM

PORTUGAL (0) 3
(Ronaldo 65 pen, Joao Felix 78, Leao 80)

GHANA (0) 2
(A. Ayew 73, Bukari 89)

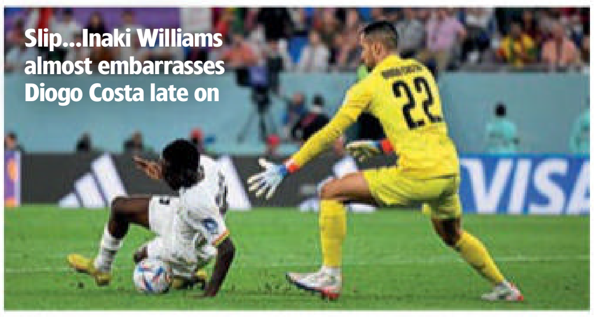
Stadium 974, Doha
Att: 42,662 Ref: Elfath (USA)

PORTUGAL Costa; Cancelo, Dias, Danilo, Guerreiro; Bernardo Silva (Palhinha 88), Neves (Leao 77), Otavio (William 56); Fernandes, Ronaldo (Ramos 88), Joao Felix (Mario 88).
🟨 Danilo, Fernandes

GHANA Ati-Zigi; Seidu (Lamptey 66), Amartey, Djiku (Kyereh 90+2), Salisu, Baba Rahman; Partey, Abdul-Samed (Semenyo 90+2), Kudus (Bukari 77); A. Ayew (J. Ayew 77), Williams.
🟨 Kudus, A. Ayew, Seidu, Williams

GOALS

1-0 Cristiano Ronaldo decisively scores after winning a penalty from Mohammed Salisu.
1-1 Mohammed Kudus' fizzed cross squeezes through Danilo's legs for Andre Ayew to turn in.
2-1 Bruno Fernandes finds Joao Felix, who races through and dinks the ball past Ati-Zigi.
3-1 Rafael Leao makes a lung-bursting run and applies the perfect finish to Fernandes' pass.
3-2 Abdul Baba Rahman beats Joao Cancelo and crosses for Osman Bukari to head home.


Slip...Inaki Williams almost embarrasses Diogo Costa late on

PORTUGAL WIN AFTER LATE DRAMA

This match came to life in the 65th minute when Ronaldo scored from the penalty spot. Ghana responded just eight minutes later but Otto Addo's decision to take off the pair that had linked up for their goal was swiftly followed by two clinical Portuguese finishes. Sub Osman Bukari gave the Black Stars hope and Diogo Costa bizarrely almost cost his team the win when he didn't spot Inaki Williams behind him, only for the striker to slip while stealing the ball.

MATTER OF FACT

Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty saw him become the first man to score in five World Cups.

	Possession	
62%		38%
	Goal attempts (■ on target)	
11(5)		9(3)
	Corners	
3		3
	Fouls	
14		19

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1PM

SOUTH KOREA (0) 2
(Cho Gue-sung 58, 61)

GHANA (2) 3
(Salisu 24, Kudus 34, 68)

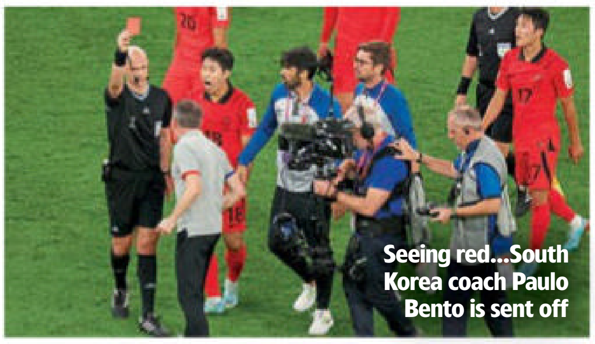
Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 43,983 Ref: Taylor (Eng)

SOUTH KOREA Kim Seung-gyu; Kim Moon-hwan, Kim Min-jae (Kwon Kyung-won 90+2), Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su; Hwang In-beom, Jung Woo-young (Hwang Ui-jo 79); Kwon Chang-hoon (Lee Kang-in 57), Jeong Woo-yeong (Na Sang-ho 46), Son Heung-min; Cho Gue-sung.
🟨 Jung Woo-young, Kim Young-gwon

GHANA Ati-Zigi; Lamptey (Odoi 78), Amartey, Salisu, Mensah (Baba Rahman 88); Partey, Abdul-Samed; Kudus (Djiku 83), A. Ayew (Kyereh 78), J. Ayew (Kamaldeen 78); Williams.
🟨 Amartey, Lamptey

GOALS

0-1 Korea fail to clear a Ghana free-kick and Mohammed Salisu reacts quickest to fire home.
0-2 Mohammed Kudus gets the slightest of touches on Jordan Ayew's exquisite cross.
1-2 Lee Kang-in wins the ball and delivers the cross that Cho Gue-sung stoops low to head in.
2-2 Cho climbs above Gideon Mensah to meet Kim Jin-su's cross and beats Lawrence Ati-Zigi with a powerful flying header for his second.
2-3 Inaki Williams misses his kick but Kudus meets Mensah's cross to finish clinically.


Seeing red...South Korea coach Paulo Bento is sent off

KUDUS FIRES GHANA TO GLORY

Having held strong to overcome South Korea's early pressure, Ghana opened the scoring and used that as a springboard to stamp their authority in the first half, adding a second. After seeing one header saved, Cho Gue-sung then scored two in three minutes to level the game. Not to be denied, Ghana struck again and valiantly saw out the win as Salisu cleared Kim Jin-su's attempt off the line and Lawrence Ati-Zigi made some eye-catching saves.

	Possession	
63%		37%
	Goal attempts (■ on target)	
22(7)		7(3)
	Corners	
13		5
	Fouls	
13		9

GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PORTUGAL	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
SOUTH KOREA	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
URUGUAY	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
GHANA	3	1	0	2	5	7	3

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 7PM

PORTUGAL (0) 2

(Fernandes 54, 90+3 pen)

URUGUAY (0) 0

Lusail Iconic Stadium, Lusail
Att: 88,668 Ref: Faghani (Irn)

PORTUGAL Costa; Cancelo, Dias, Pepe, Mendes (Guerreiro 42); Neves (Leao 69), Bernardo Silva, William (Palhinha 82); Fernandes, Ronaldo (Ramos 82), Joao Felix (Matheus Nunes 82).
🟨 Neves, Joao Felix, Dias

URUGUAY Rochet; Varela, Gimenez, Godin (Pellistri 62), Coates, Olivera (Vina 86); Valverde, Bentancur, Vecino (De Arrascaeta 62); Cavani (Suarez 73), Nunez (Gomez 72).
🟨 Bentancur, Olivera

GOALS

1-0 Bruno Fernandes' cross narrowly evades Ronaldo's header and floats inside the far post.

2-0 After his touch hits Jose Maria Gimenez's hand as he fell to the ground, Fernandes sends Sergio Rochet the wrong way with his penalty.

Inches away...Ronaldo attempts to glance home a header

FERNANDES LEADS PORTUGAL THROUGH

In a game between two sides with a pragmatic approach, Rodrigo Bentancur was the only player to break past the opposition back line in the first half. He drove through the middle before dancing past Ruben Dias and William Carvalho, eventually being halted by Diogo Costa's save. Bruno Fernandes gave Portugal the advantage just nine minutes after the restart – with questions following about whether it was Cristiano Ronaldo's goal – forcing Diego Alonso into substitutions that brought added attacking impetus for Uruguay. However, Maxi Gomez rattled the post, Luis Suarez hit the side netting and Giorgian de Arrascaeta's dinked attempt was saved before Fernandes doubled Portugal's lead with a harshly-awarded spot-kick.

PORTUGAL		URUGUAY
60%	Possession	40%
15(3)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	11(3)
6	Corners	2
10	Fouls	16

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 3PM

SOUTH KOREA (1) 2

(Kim Young-gwon 27, Hwang Hee-chan 90+1)

PORTUGAL (1) 1

(Horta 5)

Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Att: 44,097 Ref: Tello (Arg)

SOUTH KOREA Kim Seung-gyu; Kim Moon-hwan, Kwon Kyung-won, Kim Young-gwon (Son Jun-ho 81), Kim Jin-su; Hwang In-beom, Jung Woo-young, Lee Kang-in (Hwang Ui-jo 81); Lee Jae-sung (Hwang Hee-chan 66), Cho Gue-sung, (Cho Yu-min 90+3) Son Heung-min.
🟨 Lee Kang-in, Hwang Hee-chan

PORTUGAL Costa; Dalot, Pepe, Antonio Silva, Cancelo; Matheus Nunes (Palhinha 65), Neves (Leao 65), Vitinha (Bernardo Silva 81); Horta, Ronaldo (Andre Silva 65), Mario (William 82).

GOALS

0-1 Pepe's sweeping pass releases Diogo Dalot, who beats Kim Jin-su with ease and cuts the ball back for Ricardo Horta to finish.

1-1 A corner hits Ronaldo's back, and Kim Young-gwon steers the ball past Diogo Costa.

2-1 Son Heung-min leads a counter, and slips the ball through to Hwang Hee-chan to score.

National hero... Hwang Hee-chan

HEROIC HWANG IS KOREA'S SAVIOUR

South Korea had to win but got off to the worst possible start, conceding early on. The Taeguk Warriors responded well, continuing to push on even after Kim Jin-su saw his goal ruled out for offside. Their reward eventually came before the half-hour mark, and they never lost hope that a winner would arrive in the second half with their fans and players being brought to tears by Hwang Hee-chan's stoppage-time winner.

MATTER OF FACT

South Korea had to wait ten minutes for confirmation that they'd made it through.

SOUTH KOREA		PORTUGAL
38%	Possession	62%
13(6)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	13(6)
5	Corners	4
9	Fouls	10

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 3PM

GHANA (0) 0

URUGUAY (2) 2

(De Arrascaeta 26, 32)

Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah
Att: 43,443 Ref: Siebert (Ger)

GHANA Ati-Zigi; Seidu, Amartey, Salisu, Baba Rahman; Partey, Abdul-Samed (Kyereh 72); Williams (Semenyo 72), A. Ayew (Bukari 46), J. Ayew (Kamaldeen 46); Kudus (Fatawu Issahaku 90+8).
🟨 Kamaldeen, Seidu

URUGUAY Rochet; Varela, Gimenez, Coates, Olivera; Pellistri (De la Cruz 66), Valverde, Bentancur (Vecino 34), De Arrascaeta (Gomez 80); Suarez (Cavani 66), Nunez (Canobbio 80).
🟨 Nunez, Suarez, Coates, Gimenez, Cavani

GOALS

0-1 De Arrascaeta heads in from inches out after Ati-Zigi saves Luis Suarez's initial effort.

0-2 A sequence of slick one-touch passes culminates in De Arrascaeta smashing a beautifully controlled volley past Ati-Zigi.

No penalty...the decision that sparked Uruguayan fury

URUGUAY AND GHANA DUMPED OUT

After his handball in 2010, Luis Suarez further stoked Ghana's desire for revenge by saying: "It wasn't my fault because I didn't miss the penalty". However, in the worst case of history repeating itself, Andre Ayew failed to convert from the spot after Sergio Rochet caught Mohammed Kudus. Things got worse as Suarez was involved in both of Giorgian de Arrascaeta's goals, but the game eventually ended in heartbreak for both teams. Suarez was left in tears, before *La Celeste* players surrounded the referee following the final whistle feeling they were wrongly denied a penalty.

MATTER OF FACT

This was the fourth time in 14 WC appearances that Uruguay haven't reached the knockouts.

GHANA		URUGUAY
51%	Possession	49%
10(4)	Goal attempts (■ on target)	12(7)
5	Corners	2
18	Fouls	11

6 of the best

World Cup breakout stars

Danny Lewis picks out the players who made a name for themselves in Qatar

1

Azzedine OUNAHI

MOROCCO 🇲🇦

During the 2020-21 campaign, Azzedine Ounahi was playing his football in the French third tier with Avranches after not being offered a professional contract by Strasbourg. His impressive displays saw him jump up to Ligue 1 outfit Angers in 2021, with appearances at an Africa Cup of Nations and now the World Cup following.

After helping to fire Morocco to the World Cup finals with two goals against DR Congo in the play-offs, the midfielder thrived in Qatar, starting every game as the Atlas Lions made history as Africa's greatest-ever World Cup side. Ounahi has caught the eye with his ability and composure on the ball, with Luis Enrique left in awe after Morocco beat Spain on penalties, asking: "Oh my God, where does this guy come from? [He] plays incredibly well."

2

Andries NOPPERT

NETHERLANDS 🇳🇱

Noppert's route to Qatar is remarkable. Having gone through Heerenveen's youth system but not made the first team, he was given a tough introduction to senior football at NAC Breda, serving four years as a back-up, before joining Italian side Foggia and suffering relegation down to Serie D. An injury-hit spell back home at second-tier Dordrecht culminated in him being without a club for six months, resulting in family doubts over his career and thoughts of working for the police.

Eventually though he found his club in Go Ahead Eagles, before going full circle to re-join Heerenveen. At 28 years old, Noppert received his first Netherlands call-up with fewer than 50 career appearances to his name, making his debut in the World Cup opener, keeping two clean sheets and making a vital save to deny Christian Pulisic in the last 16.

3

Mohammed KUDUS

GHANA

Despite Ghana's World Cup coming to a heartbreaking end against Uruguay as they finished bottom of Group H, Kudus was one of the African talents that lit up the finals. Throughout Ghana's three games, the attacking midfielder gave them hope with his bravery on the ball and ability to make things happen, leading the failed comeback versus Portugal by setting up Andre Ayew to level the scores at 1-1.

Having already scored ten goals for Ajax this season, Kudus showed his clinical edge against South Korea, getting the slightest of glances on Jordan Ayew's cross, then beating Kim Seung-gyu with a first-time finish inside the penalty box. Even during the defeat against Uruguay, his quick-thinking won the penalty that Andre Ayew failed to convert.

4

Niclas FULLKRUG

GERMANY

While Germany endured a bitterly disappointing World Cup, Fullkrug can take positives from his time in Qatar. The striker was playing in the second tier last season but, having fired Werder Bremen to promotion and continued to score in the Bundesliga, the 29-year-old was rewarded with a call-up by Hansi Flick.

A goal followed in a 1-0 pre-tournament win versus Oman, before Fullkrug's sub appearances ensured Germany's tournament was less humiliating than it could have been amid various questions about whether Flick had a true No.9 at his disposal. After lashing home the equaliser against Spain, he flicked the ball to set up Kai Havertz before grabbing another goal of his own in the futile victory against Costa Rica.

5

Goncalo RAMOS

PORTUGAL

Fernando Santos' decision to leave out Cristiano Ronaldo, Portugal's most capped player and record goalscorer, against Switzerland was a massive one. Adding to that, Ramos was making his first start for *A Selecao*, having made two cameo substitute appearances in the group stage.

But the decision was vindicated. The 21-year-old striker smashed in the opener, grabbed an instinctive second and completed his hat-trick by luring in Yann Sommer before dinking the ball past him. There was even time among all of that goalscoring to get an assist, sliding the ball through for Raphael Guerreiro. Morocco's defence expertly kept Ramos and Portugal out, but that Switzerland match offered the nation a glimpse of their possible future in attack.

6

Jude BELLINGHAM

ENGLAND

It may seem strange to include a player with the world's biggest clubs queuing up to sign him in a list of "breakout stars", yet Bellingham's displays demonstrated that he is playing with a level of maturity and control far beyond his years.

Before this year's UEFA Nations League campaign, his only competitive England starts came against Andorra and San Marino, yet the 19-year-old was let loose in Qatar. After scoring his first England goal in the opener verus Iran, he continued to put in impressive displays throughout the finals, playing a key role in two goals against Senegal before displaying his leadership potential in defeat to France. Unquestionably a future Three Lions captain.

eye witness

Jonathan Wilson reports

QATAR

'Nothing could be trusted. Nothing was real'

A report from inside Doha on life away from the pitch during the 2022 World Cup

Just by the stadium where the World Cup final was played, there runs a broad shopping street, the Lusail Boulevard, which claims to be the Champs Elysees of the Middle East. It's an odd mix of high-end shops, a Sainsbury's, and some pretty grim-looking American fast-food chains. It's outside but air-conditioned, as so much of Qatar is. Over the past month it has been covered in World Cup branding; flags from the competing nations hung from the lampposts; the World Cup anthem dribbled out of speakers; huge adverts featuring the likes of Neymar and Lionel Messi. But what there was not was any football, or any fans.

On the day Argentina played Mexico in Lusail, I headed up from Doha early, thinking I'd be able to watch Poland v Saudi Arabia somewhere nearby. But there was no big screen. There were no cafes or bars showing games. Most didn't even have TVs. I headed to the mall modelled on the Place Vendome, in Paris. Nothing there either. Nor on the Lusail Corniche. There were places where you could pose for Instagram photos alongside the words "Qatar 2022". But there was no football and so there were no fans.

Having missed most of the first half, I eventually found a screen at the Arabian Nights fan park by the Katara Hotel, that huge gleaming monstrosity supposedly shaped like the claws of a crab. For 20 riyals it was possible to access a long, narrow strip with plenty of screens. There were chicken kebabs and fried potatoes. A hooded falcon sat on a plinth near the centre. Arriving late, all the seats were taken, so I found myself wedged between a candyfloss machine and a cage in which three goats tried to ignore the children seeking to provoke them. There was, at least, a sense of atmosphere, a local(ish) crowd noisily supporting Saudi Arabia, but this was clearly a deeply ersatz experience. This wasn't where people in Doha habitually watched football.

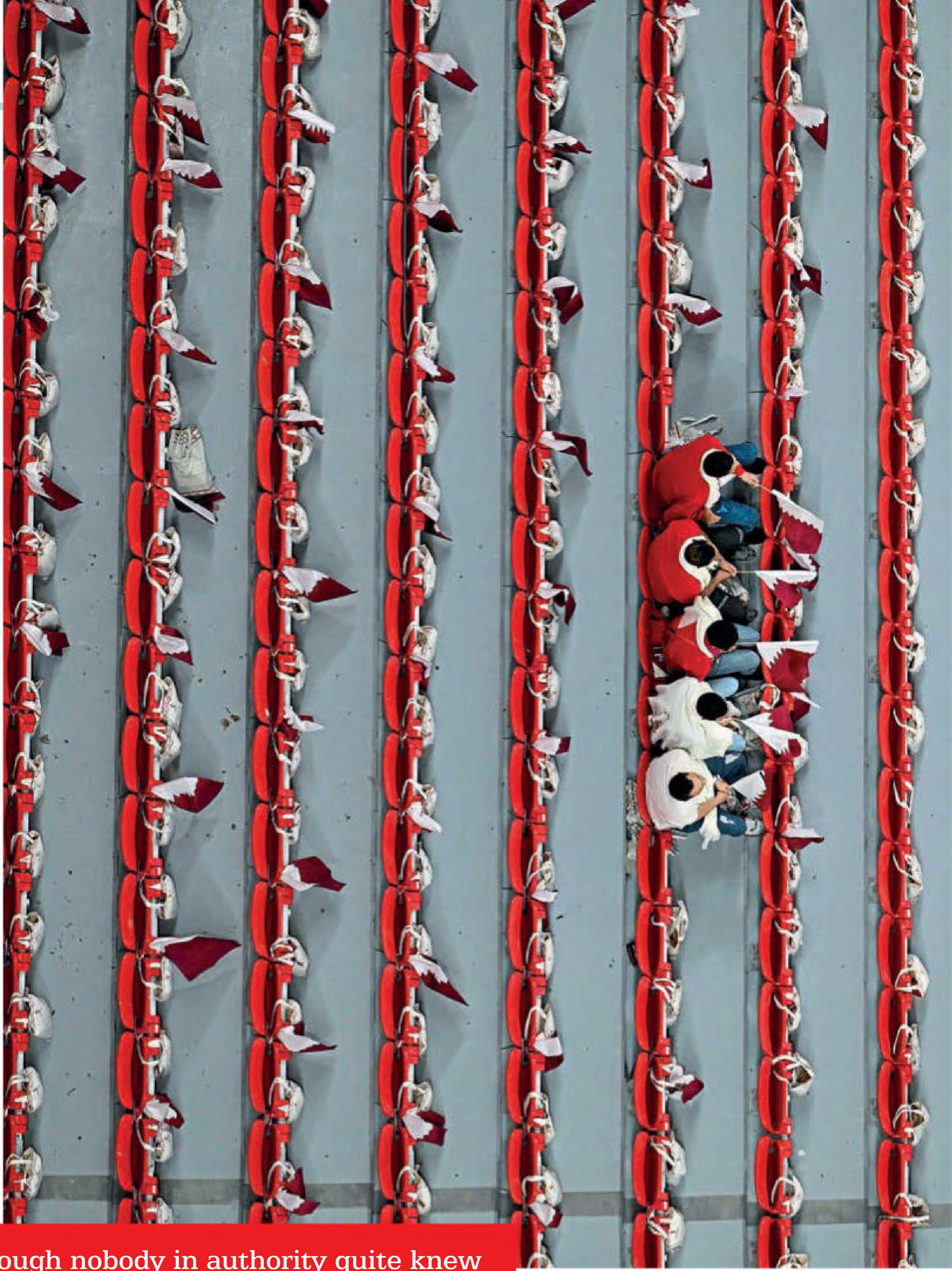
And that was the sense throughout. Football appeared to be an afterthought. There were the trappings of the World Cup, but it was as though nobody in authority quite knew what a World Cup was. This is not specifically a Qatari phenomenon. FIFA is a world of fakery. The move to stadium DJs and MCs whipping up the crowd was well underway long before we got to Doha, but it was here that it reached its full expression. Stadiums before kick-off became a sinkhole of inanity because, while FIFA and Qatar welcomed the fans, they were terrified about what they might do or say if their own songs and chants were permitted to be heard.

Very little thought seemed to be given to crowds. This is not the fault of the thousands of volunteers who were good-humoured and helpful, or really of the Metro system, which in many ways was a triumph. But it didn't reach Al Bayt, the stadium in the desert 30 miles north of Doha. So fans either had to travel by taxi or take shuttle buses along vast four-lane highways, negotiating a maze of car parks.

Of course it's never easy when there are 80,000 ▸

Al Khor
Lusail Stadium

Lusail Boulevard…the “Champs Elysees of the Middle East”



ABOVE: Empty seats...a bird's-eye view of Qatar fans during their defeat to Ecuador

fans to clear from a stadium, as was the case at Lusail. The queuing system at the Metro there worked relatively well. But there was a problem heading to the stadium, which was that the majority of fans changing onto the red line north had to change at Msheireb, where they ran into supporters making their way to the fan park on the Corniche near Al Bidda. The day of Argentina's quarter-final win over the Netherlands, several hours before kick-off, the station at Msheireb became so dangerously overcrowded that passengers getting to the bottom of the escalator were unable to get off. Perhaps the argument would be that Qatar has no experience of hosting such vast numbers of people, which is true; but that's yet another reason why it should never have hosted the World Cup.

Propaganda for the local organisers were everywhere. There was a spate of news stories explaining how this had been a great, family-friendly World Cup because there was no alcohol available. Which rather neglected the great, family-friendly World Cups of Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Germany, and Japan and South Korea. Alcohol is not the issue. Those stories rapidly vanished after clashes between Morocco fans and security before the quarter-final against Portugal, seemingly caused by the presence of fans without tickets.

But how many fans were ever at games? Attendance figures rarely seemed to make sense. After a few days in which the attendance habitually outstripped the capacity of the stadium, FIFA hastily explained capacities had expanded because fewer media and corporate seats were needed than had initially been expected. But then there were claims of sell-outs when thousands of seats were clearly empty.

Nothing could be trusted. Nothing was real. As Qatar lost the opening game against Ecuador with embarrassing ease, thousands of local supporters went home long before the final whistle. But one small section of the stadium remained full, with maroon-clad fans that carried on chanting for Qatar. Here, then, was the local football culture we had been promised. But no, it turned out they had, according to the *New York Times*, been shipped in from Lebanon to provide colour and atmosphere.

The Aspire Academy set up its Football Dreams programme in 2007 and for seven years scouted more than 3.5 million boys aged 12 or 13 from developing nations (most with a handy ExCo member) offering 20 Aspire

It was as though nobody in authority quite knew what a World Cup was

Overcrowded... inside Msheireb Metro Station

Nasser Al Khater
Chief Executive Officer
FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™
now is all

Controversial...Nasser Al Khater

scholarships a year, the highest-level football coaching in Qatar. But the programme was closed down in 2014 for reasons that have never really been explained. Aspire graduates formed the basis of the Qatar national side at this tournament, but where else would they train? What was all that investment for? The worst-ever performance by a host?

As well as a fake Place Vendome there is a fake Venice, a fake Beverly Hills and a Winter Wonderland. Everything is fake. Which is perhaps what happens when you build a country in just a couple of decades. You copy elsewhere and the result is artificiality. You go too fast and your exploitation of the world's poor becomes obvious. Almost all wealthy nations import workers from economically weaker countries to do the jobs nobody wants to do; what they don't do is house them in giant labour camps on a pittance that is often paid late, if at all, having taken away their passports. Safety standards are drawn up and applied and, should an accident happen and a worker die, there is a full investigation. That, manifestly, has not been happening in Qatar.

All the misinformation about safety on the building sites – the ludicrous claims of only three deaths on specific World Cup projects was suddenly upgraded to "between 400 and 500" by the tournament's chief organiser, Hassan Al Thawadi, during an interview in November – was laid bare when a Filipino worker fell to his death from a ramp while walking alongside a forklift mending lights at the resort where the Saudi Arabia team had been based. "We're having a successful World Cup and this is something you want to talk about right now?" said Nasser Al Khater, head of Qatar's World Cup organising committee. "Death is a natural part of life, whether at work, whether in your sleep. A worker died, our condolences to his family, but it is strange that is something you want to focus on as your first question." Nothing could have better expressed the callousness of the authorities, of Qatari society, for the lives of the migrant workers.

Plenty of visitors spoke of the warmth of the welcome they had received, how pleasant everything seemed. Which is true. For the wealthy – and the majority of European visitors are comparatively wealthy – life in Qatar is good. There are plenty as well who come from Kenya or Nepal, Ghana or Bangladesh and find their standard of living significantly improved. But there are many thousands who do not. There is talk from the government of labour reforms, but no sense of accountability; everything is about image. The real story is the arrests made as the tournament entered its final week as part of an investigation into allegations of illegal lobbying in Europe.

So what is it all for? Why bother with this vast Potemkin state? Why did Qatar want the World Cup? The answer perhaps lies in Lusail, in the – as yet – empty luxury villas and the smart apartment blocks. Qatar wants the mega rich to live here – and perhaps soulless clean malls full of luxury brands, populated by other rich people, is a draw. But it also wants middle-managers and professionals, computer technicians and data analysts, and it will draw them from countries unable to provide such a high standard of living.

That is the nature of global capitalism, but it is also protection. If Qatar houses émigrés from all over the world, if it has a resonance far beyond its own shores, it is that much harder for either Saudi Arabia or Iran, the two great regional powers, to swallow it up. The World Cup has been just a part of that strategy.

Detained for taking a photo

Journalist ***Samindra Kunti*** *recounts how he was detained by security for taking a photo in Qatar*

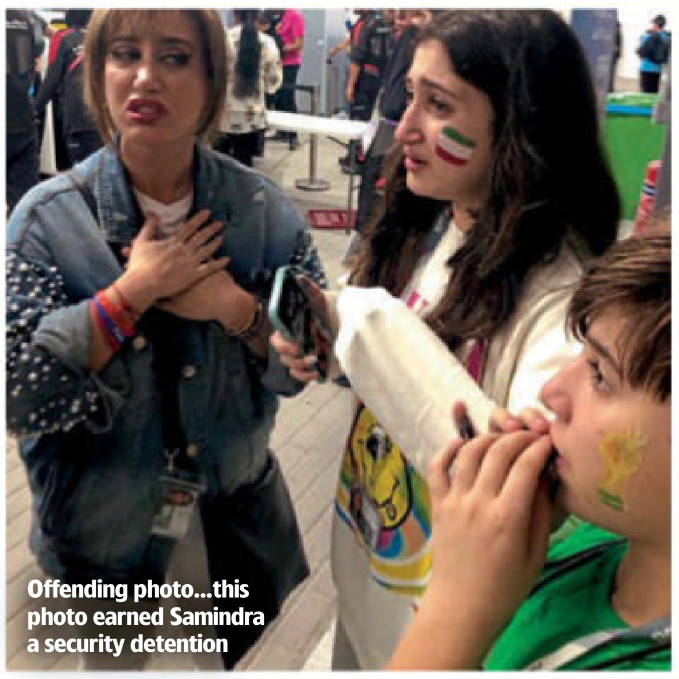
At the political blockbuster match, Iran v United States, I was detained for 15 minutes after taking a photo of a girl crying because security confiscated her Persian flag, a symbol for anti-regime protesters. The atmosphere at the Al Thumama Stadium had been thick with tension and apprehension among the Iranian fans, split into anti and pro-regime camps.

This game transcended the sport, at least from the Iranian perspective. It was not the geopolitical shock of the late '90s when the pair met at the World Cup in France, but, again, a flashpoint for the nationwide protests back home prompted by the death of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the morality police.

Underlying close ties between the host nation and Iran, security was ramped up at Team Melli's final group encounter to prevent any anti-regime protests. At Iran's first match against England, supporters were asked to wear their Amini T-shirts inside out when entering the stadium; at the second match, against Wales, such T-shirts were confiscated; and for the United States match most supporters left them at home. The crackdown from security was complete. Even Palestinian flags and symbols, ubiquitous at the first World Cup in the region, were confiscated.

Iranian fan Saba told Dhiman Sarkar, a colleague from the *Hindustan Times*, and myself that she was asked to show her bra at security to ensure she was not hiding "dissenting" messages. We went to security to see for ourselves and when I took the photo, "the tournament police" demanded I delete it. I refused and was detained. "Big problem," I was told, while outside Dhiman tried to reach FIFA's venue media officer.

After 15 minutes, a senior police officer repeated the demand to delete the photo. I obliged, was released, and later retained the photo in my deleted folder. That same evening, Danish TV reporter Rasmus Tantholdt said he had also been detained briefly, underlying that there is little to no press freedom in Qatar, ranked 119th on the 2022 World Press Freedom Index.



Offending photo...this photo earned Samindra a security detention

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As well as looking back over the past year, we also look forward, highlighting the big stories of 2023 before they happen and previewing the African Champions League group stage and Asian Champions League west region knockout phase.

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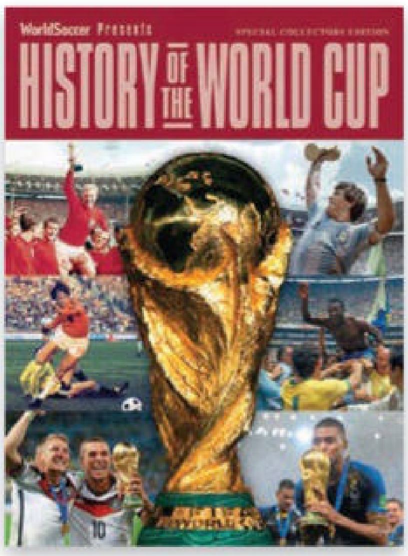
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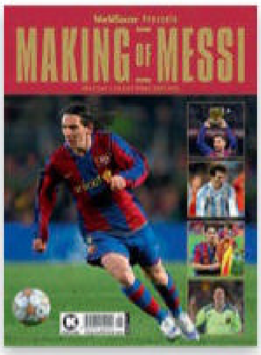
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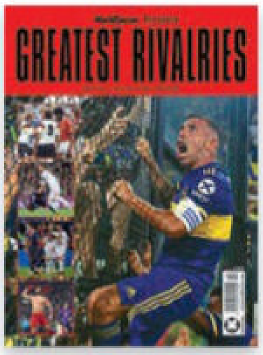
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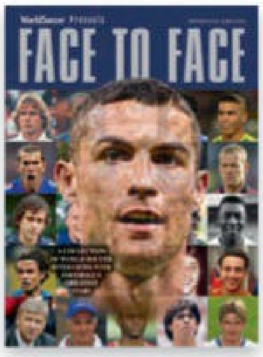
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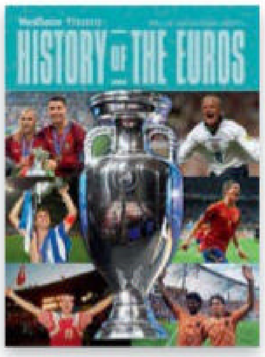
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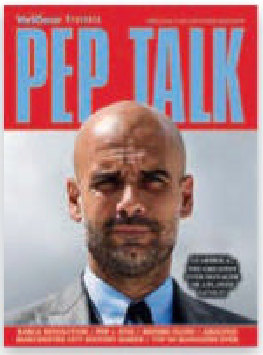

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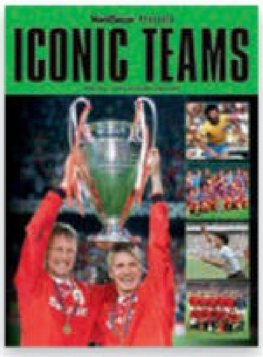
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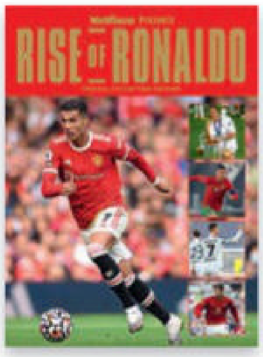
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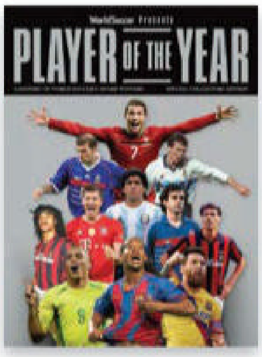
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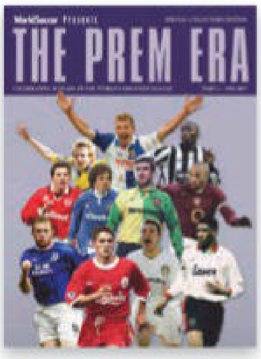
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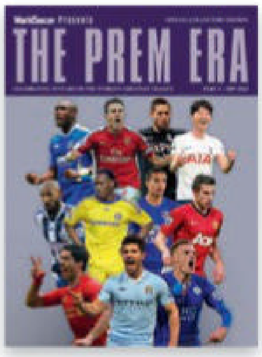
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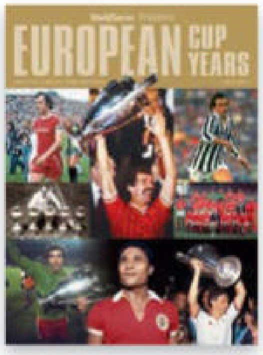
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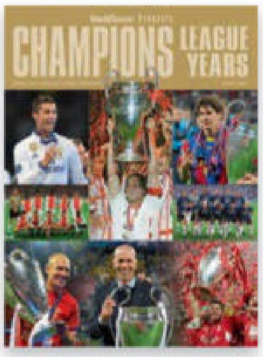
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Football's

MOST WANTED

Jamie Evans and **Jared Tinslay** take a closer look at the players who could be on the move in the January transfer window

ENZO FERNANDEZ

(Benfica)
With the level of analysis, scouting and research that goes into modern clubs' transfer operations, the days of players being signed for big money off the back of a handful of impressive World Cup performances are probably a thing of the past. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, as Enzo Fernandez tiptoed into the penalty area during Argentina's Group C clash with Mexico before curling a wicked effort into the top corner, his price tag crept up by a few digits.

The 21-year-old midfielder was already on the radar of many of Europe's biggest clubs after starring in Benfica's dominant start to the 2022-23 season. Only two outfield players had played more minutes for the Lisbon giants than Fernandez when the league paused for the World Cup, with the unbeaten Benfica eight points clear of their nearest rivals.

> Goalscoring is more of a bonus feature to Fernandez's game

Despite catching the eye with his sensational strike against Mexico – and opening his Benfica account with a sweetly-struck volley from the edge of the area – goalscoring is more of a bonus feature to Fernandez's game than an integral element. A clever, deep-lying midfielder, he is a tempo-setter, a *regista* with a superb passing range, averaging more than 90 passes per Portuguese league game prior to Qatar. No stranger to the uglier side of his role, he also wins his fair share of tackles – and concedes his fair share of fouls.

Fernandez already has a long and growing list of admirers, yet the biggest obstacle to clubs hoping to sign him could be a simple matter of timing. Benfica only signed him from River Plate (for a fee of €10 million) in June, and will be reluctant to let him go for anything less than a huge profit given how integral he has been to their season – and not just domestically. He only missed one game as the Eagles advanced to the last 16 of the Champions League as group winners and, with Club Brugge awaiting them in the next round, the opportunity to match last season's journey to the quarter-finals is a real prospect.

Benfica are, of course, not immune to the advances of bigger clubs – as they demonstrated last summer by cashing in on Darwin Nunez after just two years – but even they will surely be keen to hold on to their top prospect until the summer. Then again, this is also a club that knows when to cash their chips in, and Fernandez's value may well be as high now as it will ever be.

His impressive performance in Qatar

NICOLA ZALEWSKI

(Roma)
Interest at home (Juventus, Inter and Milan) and abroad (PSG and Tottenham) has forced Roma into entering contract negotiations with their young left-winger, who turns 21 in January and still has two years left on his contract. The capital club will be hoping he commits his future to them.

is simply the latest chapter in a remarkable young career. Only three years ago, he was unable to get into the River Plate first team and was loaned out to Defensa y Justicia, where he played a starring role as Hernan Crespo's unfancied side lifted the 2020 Copa Sudamericana, South America's second-tier club competition. On his return to River, he starred in the Julian Alvarez-inspired side that won the 2021 Argentine league title.

YOURI TIELEMANS

(Leicester City)
The Foxes are reportedly already lining up Lorient's Enzo Le Fee as a potential replacement for Tielemans, who is out of contract in 2023 and not expected to agree a new deal. Potential suitors of the Belgium midfielder, including Arsenal, could avoid a summer free-for-all by bidding in January.

INIGO MARTINEZ

(Athletic Bilbao)
According to reports, Barcelona have a verbal agreement for the experienced centre-back to join as a free agent next summer, but they may be willing to pay Athletic a nominal fee to secure the deal in January. Bayern Munich's Benjamin Pavard is also a target at right-back.

RAFAEL LEAO

(Milan)
The Portugal winger caught the eye in last season's title win and in this season's Champions League, and Milan are keen to tie him down to a new contract. Yet doing so has not proven easy. If an agreement can't be reached, Milan may need to cash in on him, with Leao's current deal expiring in 2024.

LOVRO MAJER

(Rennes)
Dubbed "the next Luka Modric", not least for sharing the same initials, the Croatia international and former Dinamo Zagreb midfielder has turned heads with his performances for Rennes this season. His contract runs until 2026 so the French club are unwilling to budge from their €60m valuation.

Football's MOST WANTED

MARCUS EDWARDS

(Sporting)
After scoring against his old club Tottenham in the Champions League, the winger admitted he would like to return to the Premier League one day. That return could come soon, and Spurs would have a big advantage on other rivals having included a 50 per cent sell-on clause when selling him.

HAKIM ZIYECH

(Chelsea)
Rafael van der Vaart suggested his former club Tottenham could win the Premier League by signing Ziyech. Only three players have joined Spurs from Chelsea in the Premier League era but, with the Blues pursuing Everton ace Anthony Gordon, the Moroccan could become available to Antonio Conte.

PAU TORRES

(Villarreal)
The Spain defender's €55m release clause has put off clubs in the past, but it seems Villarreal may now consider a bid below that figure. Unai Emery is rumoured to want a reunion at Aston Villa, although the centre-back's previous desire to play European football make those links questionable.

DENZEL DUMFRIES

(Internazionale)
Brought in to replace Achraf Hakimi, the Netherlands' attacking right wing-back has impressed since moving to Serie A in 2021 for €15m. Upon hearing about potential interest from Manchester United and other clubs, the Dutch defender said he was "flattered" but focused on Inter.

JONATHAN DAVID

(Lille)
The Canada marksman moved to France from Gent three summers ago and was part of the Lille squad that beat PSG to the Ligue 1 title in 2020-21. He recently said he would be open to a move to either Spain or England, and his profile would have been boosted by playing in Qatar.

YOUSSOUFA MOUKOKO

(Borussia Dortmund)
Barely 18 years old and already a first-team regular at Dortmund and a member of Germany's World Cup squad, striker Moukoko's delay on signing a new deal at Borussia has caught the attention of every major club in Europe. Liverpool and Manchester United reportedly lead the race for his signature.

MAO HOSOYA

(Kashiwa Reysol)
Japan is proving to be an increasingly productive breeding ground for European clubs eyeing a bargain, and 2022 J. League Rookie of the Year Hosoya is a strong candidate to be the next target. World Cup call-ups Shuto Machino and Yuki Soma will also be on clubs' radars.

CODY GAKPO

(PSV)
Top of both the goal and assists charts in the Eredivisie before shining in Qatar, Gakpo is already a star for both club and country. Advised against joining Manchester United in the summer by Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal, the 23-year-old attacker will be even more in demand in 2023.

MYKHAYLO MUDRYK

(Shakhtar Donetsk)
Few teams have started a Champions League campaign in circumstances as difficult as Shakhtar did this season. With Ukrainian football paralysed by Russia's invasion, they had only played three league matches in nine months when their campaign began against RB Leipzig. Their preparation came in the form of a series of friendlies as they toured Europe having been forced out of their Donbas home. Their squad had been decimated by departures, leaving them with a team of almost entirely academy-produced players.

By the end of their stunning 4-1 victory in Leipzig, there was no doubt as to which member of Shakhtar's new-look young squad was the rising star. Mudryk was involved in three of his side's goals, assisting two after electric bursts down the left wing, either side of a crisp left-footed finish past Peter Gulacsi. He went on to score two more goals as Shakhtar finished third in their group and advanced to the Europa League, where they will play Rennes in the play-offs in February. His domestic form has been equally impressive, with five goals and six assists in his first ten games in the Ukrainian Premier League, which is being played out behind closed doors.

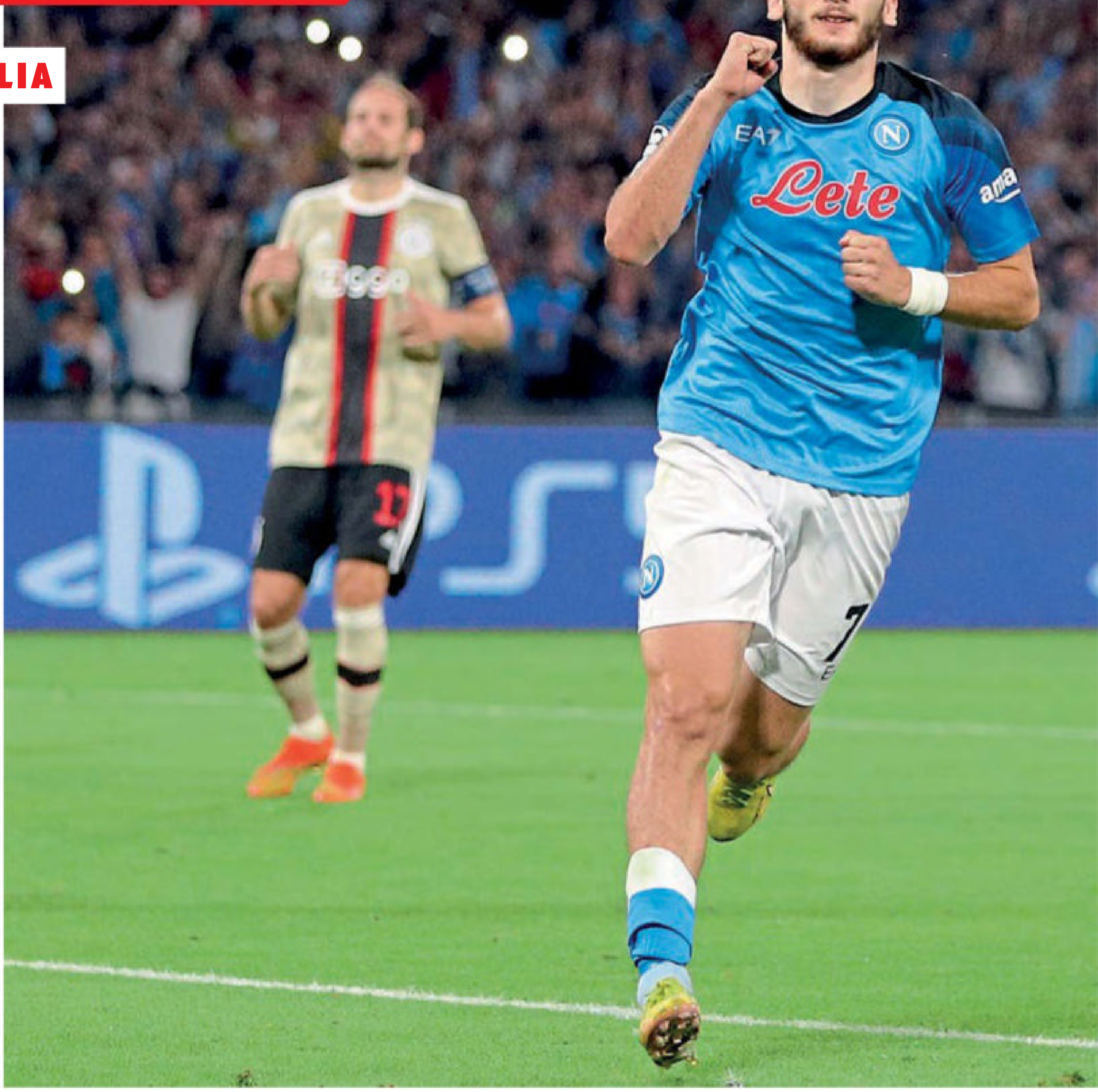
The exodus from Shakhtar since the start of the year – particularly of Brazilians David Neres, Fernando, Pedrinho, Alan Patrick and Tete – has been a blessing in disguise for Mudryk. Prior to this season, he had only started eight league matches for the club he joined at the age of 16, but he had doubled that tally by the start of November. Alongside striker Danylo Sikan, another 21-year-old Ukrainian, he has been instrumental in leading the attack of a club that is used to relying on Brazilian imports.

The 21-year-old winger is said to have a €60m price tag on his head

With the January window looming, Shakhtar find themselves in a unique position. They are in a battle with FIFA over the ruling that allowed players to leave Ukraine after the invasion – a ruling that they say cost them €50m. Selling Mudryk would allow them to recoup some of the losses they have made, but they are also determined not to be short-changed again. The winger is said to have a €60m price tag on his head.

And he is not short of admirers. Reports say Premier League leaders Arsenal have made him their priority, while Newcastle United and Juventus have also been linked with a move. A traditional winger who operates down his favourite side rather than playing as an inverted right-winger, his pace and directness make him a serious counter-attacking threat – as he has demonstrated in Europe this season.

KHVICHA KVARATSKHELIA



(Napoli)
Having already nicknamed him "Kvaradona" in tribute to club legend Diego Maradona, it will give Napoli fans no end of anguish to see their new hero already linked with a move on, just a few months after he arrived at the club from Dinamo Batumi.

They would also be entitled to ask why he would want to be anywhere but Naples right now, with *Gli Azzurri* flying high in Serie A and plotting a Champions League last-16 clash with Eintracht Frankfurt after topping a group featuring Liverpool and Ajax.

Still, that will not stop clubs circling around the in-form and highly-talented Kvaratskhelia.

If he were to leave in January, it would be to his fourth club in a year. In March, he walked out on Rubin Kazan following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, returning to Georgia to play for Batumi. Eight goals in just 11 matches convinced Napoli to pay around €12m for him, and his impressive productivity has continued in Italy. Before the World Cup break, he had scored eight goals and assisted another eight in 17 Champions League and Serie A matches, while also averaging more completed dribbles than anyone else in Italy's top flight.

> His low centre of gravity, balance and quick feet allow him to regularly make defenders look foolish

Yet the 21-year-old is not a player that is defined by stats. The top result when typing his name into YouTube is a video titled: "50 Players Humiliated By Khvicha Kvaratskhelia," and it delivers on its promise. His low centre of gravity, excellent balance and exceptionally quick feet allow him to regularly make defenders look foolish, while his reliable end product gives them a dilemma: stand off and he'll deliver a cross or a shot, get too tight and he'll dance past them.

Operating from the left of Napoli's three-man attack, he has struck up a particularly effective partnership with centre-forward Victor Osimhen, setting up three of the Nigerian's first eight Serie A goals. Between them, the duo have done an outstanding job of replacing Dries Mertens and Lorenzo Insigne, the club's top two record scorers, who departed in the summer.

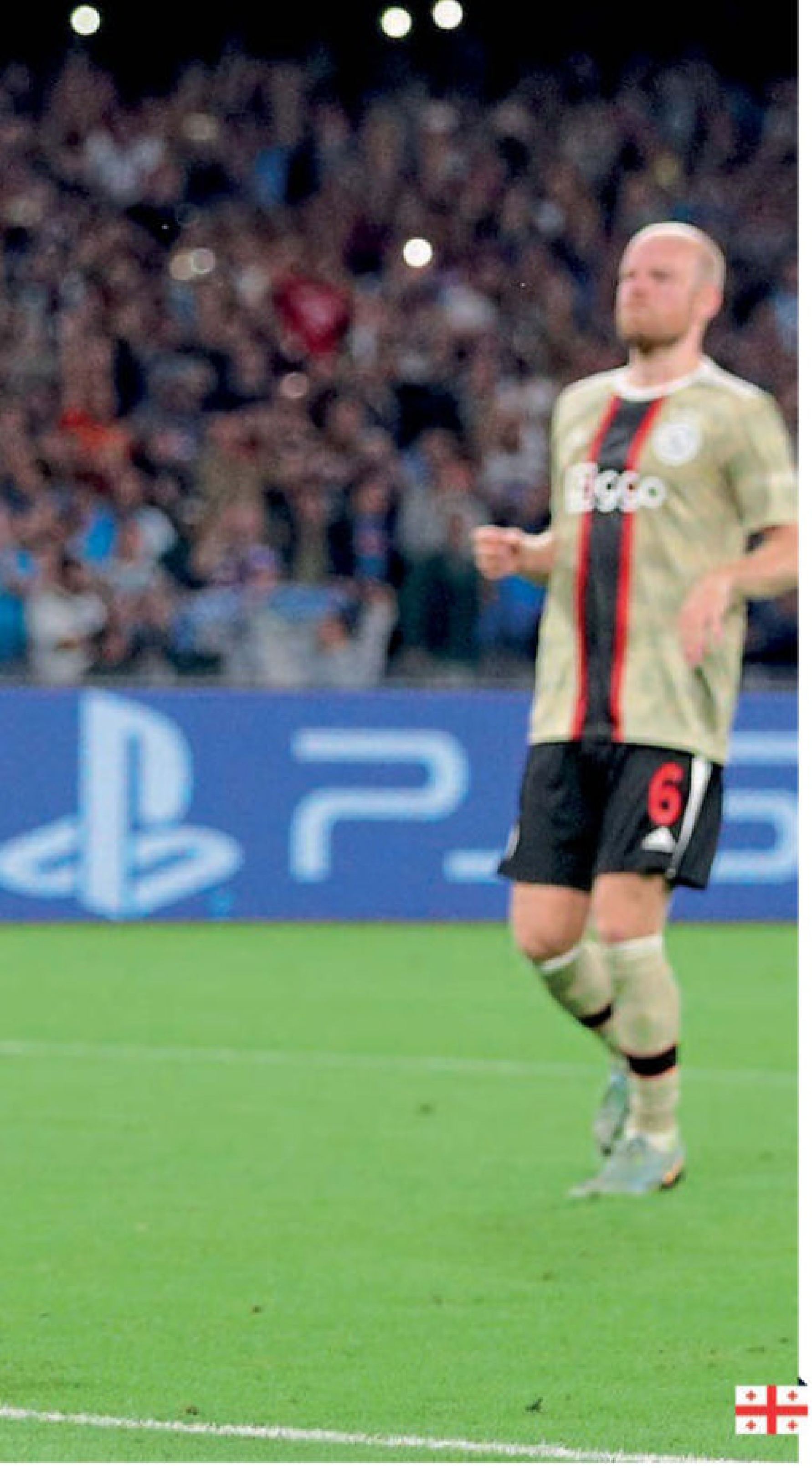
Given that, it is hard to imagine Napoli being willing to sell at any price. Yet some reports claim that a new deal for the Georgian will include a release clause of €65m. A healthy profit on their initial outlay, certainly, but probably not enough to put off the likes of Chelsea, Paris Saint-Germain or Manchester City, who have all been linked with the winger. Or perhaps even Newcastle United,

SERGEJ MILINKOVIC-SAVIC

(Lazio)
The Serbia midfielder has enjoyed a sublime start to 2022-23, directly involved in 11 goals in his first 12 games. Lazio president Claudio Lotito says: "He is now worth €120m, and every month the price goes up," much to the frustration of Juventus, Arsenal and Manchester United.

WESTON McKENNIE

(Juventus)
Reports from Italy suggest Juventus are willing to sell McKennie in 2023, from as early as the January window, amid plenty of Premier League interest. *I Bianconeri* are looking towards Atletico Madrid midfielder Rodrigo De Paul as the American's replacement.



whose Saudi owners could boost their Champions League dreams by swooping for one of the outstanding young talents in Europe.

Then again, Kvaradona is currently in place to write himself into the Napoli history books – and the affections of the club's fans forever – if he can help steer them to a first title since 1990, when Diego was still in situ. That would be hard to walk away from, no matter who makes him an offer this January.

ALBERTO MOLEIRO

(Las Palmas) Comparisons have already been drawn between Moleiro and Pedri, who also emerged from Las Palmas' academy. Barcelona snapped up the Spain midfielder for just €5m in 2019, and nobody wants to miss out on another bargain: Real Madrid, Manchester City and Liverpool are among those interested.

JESPER LINDSTROM

(Eintracht Frankfurt) As many as seven European clubs are said to be competing for the Denmark international's signature including Manchester City, Arsenal, Juventus, Milan, Bayern Munich and Barcelona. The winger was recently quoted to be "insanely happy" to read of reports liking him with the Gunners.

JOAO FELIX

(Atletico Madrid) Following his sparkling performances in Qatar, where he was able to truly express himself without the shackles often imposed on him at club level, fans got a glimpse of the massive potential of Joao Felix. Arsenal are said to be leading the race for his signature as they step up their chase for a replacement for the injured Gabriel Jesus.

BEN BRERETON DIAZ

(Blackburn Rovers) While the Chile striker has insisted he will stay at Ewood Park until the end of the season, the decision might be out of his hands. His contract expires in the summer so the Rovers hierarchy risk losing him for free; although if he fires them to promotion, it will have been worth it.

KAI WAGNER

(Philadelphia Union) The MLS Cup final, which Philadelphia Union lost to LAFC, was widely reported to be Wagner's final game for the club, having impressed throughout the season with his attacking forays from left-back. One of his opponents in the final, Ecuador midfielder Jose Cifuentes, is also likely to be heading to Europe.

2023 CALENDARS

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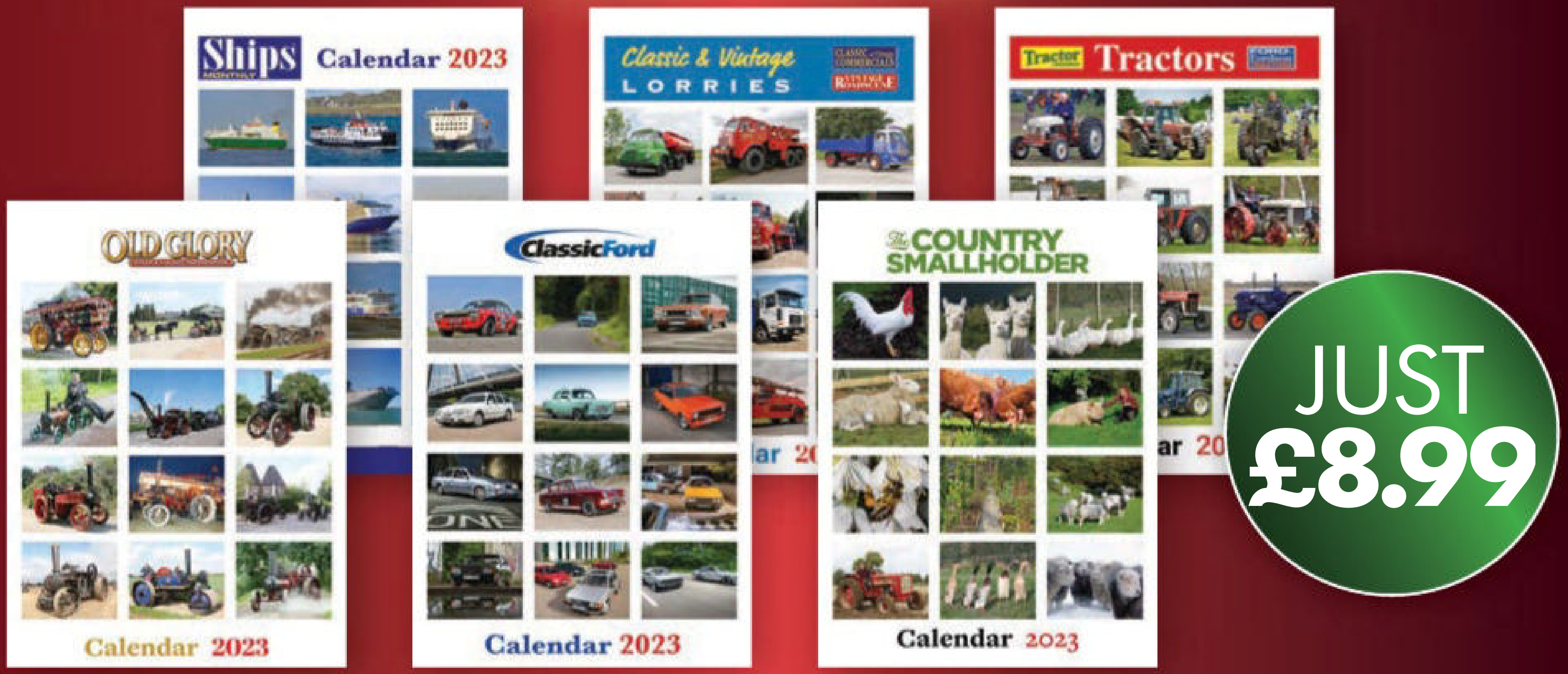
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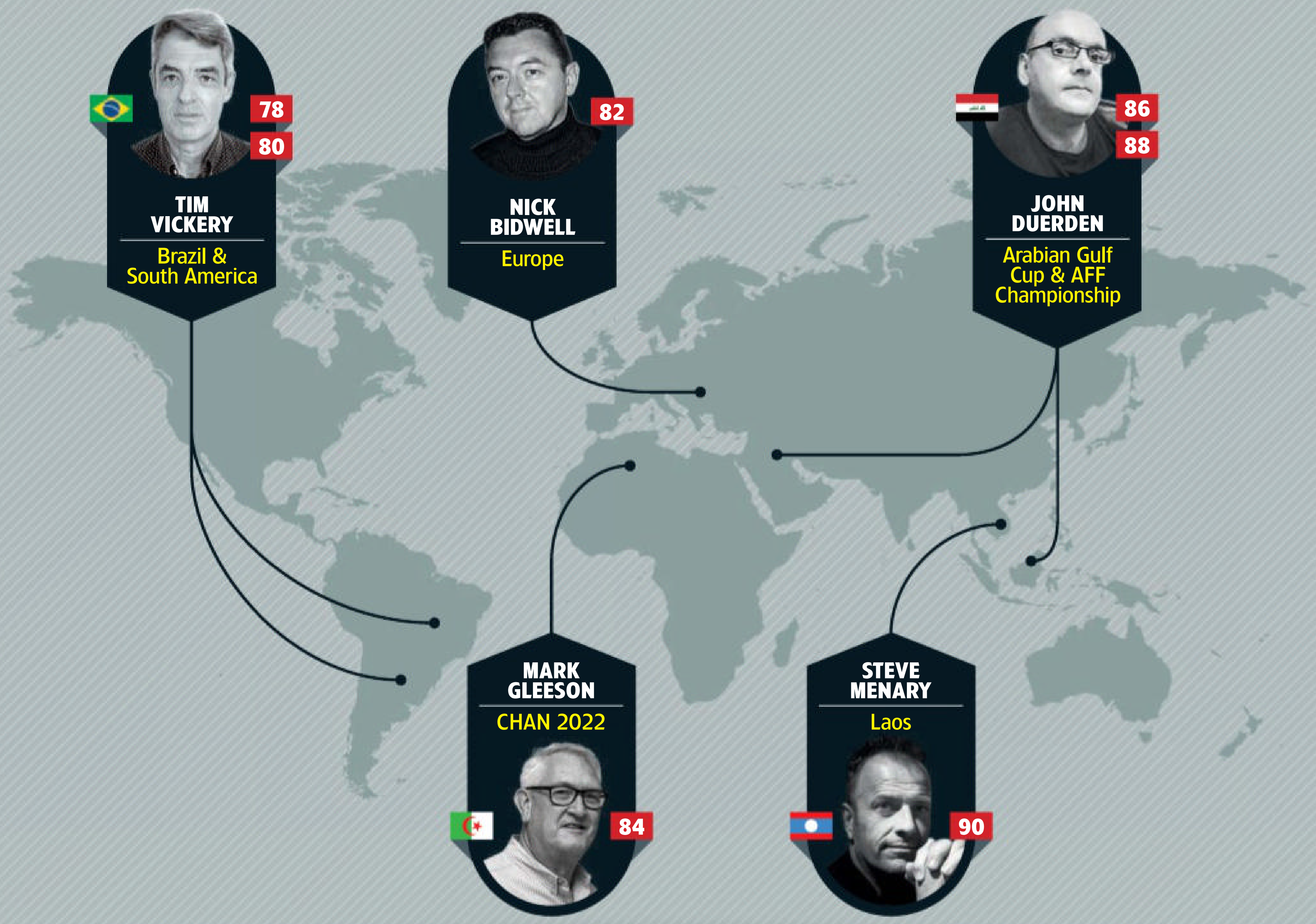
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25th Arabian Gulf Cup preview...Bahrain won the last edition of the tournament in Qatar in 2019

Brazil

TIM VICKERY

Palmeiras cruise to Brazilian league title

Sao Paulo-based club win their 11th national championship, extending their record as the league's most successful team

Portuguese coach Abel Ferreira was little known when he swapped PAOK in Greece for Palmeiras towards the end of 2020. His profile is much higher now, but at the start of this season there was still one doubt hanging over him. He had won two versions of the Copa Libertadores and one Brazilian Cup. But was he best suited to knockout competitions? Notoriously risk averse in the big matches, was he too cautious for a successful league campaign?

He has now successfully silenced that doubt. Because the race for the 2022 Brazilian league title was not even close.

In 2021, a "big three" had appeared to consolidate themselves at the top of the Brazilian game. Big-spending Atletico Mineiro had emerged to complete the domestic double, while Rio giants Flamengo are a mighty force. Neither had good league campaigns in 2022. After their golden year, Atletico fell back badly, perhaps distracted by their plans to open a new stadium in 2023. And Flamengo had a disastrous start when their Portuguese coach Paulo Sousa insisted on a back-three system that did not suit the players. Dorival Junior came in and got the side right, but focused instead on the knockout competitions. Flamengo won the Libertadores and domestic cup, while often fielding reserve sides in league games.

Does any of this devalue the triumph of Palmeiras? Not at all. They scored more goals than anyone else and conceded fewer. Beaten in the first round and in the last, they suffered just one defeat in the 36 matches in between – an extraordinary testimony to the team's consistency in such a demanding competition. Abel Ferreira

Champions... Palmeiras players celebrate with the league trophy

is both a highly competent collective organiser of a team, and a specialist at developing individual players. The transformation of Rony from a frustrating winger to the team's cutting edge at centre-forward has been a wonder to behold. So superior was the campaign of Palmeiras, that they wrapped up the title weeks in advance, without ever having a serious challenger.

Under former Brazil coach Mano Menezes, Internacional came second, but more interesting were third-placed Fluminense. Coach Fernando Diniz has long been seen as a promise, and this was by far the best year for his bold approach, where players are thrown forward in a bid to overload one flank. With plenty of options for a forward pass, the former great hope Paulo Henrique Ganso enjoyed the best year of his wayward career, while Argentine goal-poacher German Cano feasted on chances to finish as the league's top scorer with 26 strikes.

Corinthians finished fourth, improving during the campaign as playmaker Renato Augusto recovered his fitness and Portuguese coach Vitor Pereira found his feet. He stepped down at the end of a tricky year in which the highlight was the display in the final of the domestic cup, where they lost on penalties.

Another coach stepping down is Luiz Felipe Scolari, who retired at the end of the year after safely steering Athletico Paranaense into sixth place and the group phase of the 2023 Copa Libertadores. Atletico Mineiro will have to go through the qualifying round, a considerable disappointment, while the same achievement for Fortaleza is a major triumph. One of the few first division teams from the north east, their campaign is a logistical nightmare, and their debut participation in the 2022 Libertadores added to the strain. They spent much of the first half of the season bottom of the table, until Argentine coach Juan Pablo Vojvoda worked his magic and they soared up the table.

Of Brazil's eight Libertadores representatives – Flamengo, Palmeiras, Internacional, Fluminense, Corinthians and Athletico Paranaense, plus Atletico Mineiro and Fortaleza in the qualifying rounds – seven took part in 2022. The fact that Fortaleza are among them is a minor miracle, but this is a statistic that points to an undeniable trend of distances opening up between wealthy clubs and the others. Sao Paulo, America Mineiro, Botafogo, Santos, Goias and Red Bull Bragantino will play in the Copa Sudamericana.

One club who are extremely disappointed to have missed out on a Libertadores slot are Sao Paulo, since this was their stated objective. Botafogo will be happy to have survived in their first season back in the top flight, also their first under the new USA-based regime. They will go into 2023 feeling positive – a feeling that Santos cannot share.

Pele's old club is a miracle of its own. The population of Santos is under half a million, and it is barely credible that the club have been able to outperform giants from the metropolis. Youth development keeps them punching above their weight, but the storm clouds are gathering. Four relatively minor teams were relegated – Ceara, Atletico Goianiense, Avai and Juventude. They have been replaced by a quartet of traditional giants – Cruzeiro, Gremio, Bahia and Vasco da Gama. The battle to stay up next year looks set to be especially fierce.

> They scored more goals than anyone else and conceded fewer. Beaten in the first round and in the last, they suffered just one defeat in the 36 matches in between

Managerial mastermind... Abel Ferreira

Star man... Palmeiras striker Rony

Top scorer... Fluminense striker German Cano struck 26 league goals

SEASON'S BEST

COACH OF THE YEAR
Abel FERREIRA (Palmeiras)
With the talent and intensity (and sometimes the antics) of a young Jose Mourinho. Some see him as a replacement for Tite after Qatar. But would his frequently cautious approach prove a good fit for the national team?

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
DUDU (Palmeiras)
Stocky wide striker, experienced and intelligent, who scored seven goals in the campaign and helped set up plenty of others. A reserve in the 2011 Under-20 World Cup-winning team who briefly played in Ukraine for Dynamo Kyiv.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
ENDRICK (Palmeiras)
It is hard on Athletico Paranaense's highly-promising Vitor Roque, but the award goes to someone who only played towards the end of the campaign and will join Real Madrid in 2024. The 16-year-old striker looks like a genuine phenomenon.

Newcomer of the Year...Endrick

SOUTH AMERICAN LEAGUES REVIEW

	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CONTINENTAL QUALIFIERS	COACH OF THE YEAR
Bolivia PRIMERA DIVISION	The 16 clubs play two tournaments a year. The Apertura ends with play-offs, and in the final **Bolivar** beat The Strongest in the La Paz derby. The Strongest were ahead in the league-based Clausura, but political disturbances halted the action with six rounds to go.	**Libertadores:** Bolivar, The Strongest and (qualifying rounds) Always Ready and Nacional Potosi. **Sudamericana:** Oriente Petrolero, Guabira, Atletico Palmaflor and Blooming.	**Humberto VIVIANI** (Atletico Palmaflor) Left Palmaflor before the end of the year, but the former defender did a fine job in the Apertura, assuring a small provincial club of Copa Sudamericana action next season.
Chile PRIMERA DIVISION	The 16 teams play in a league format, and the destiny of the title was not in doubt after Santiago giants **Colo-Colo** took the lead after eight rounds and ended the 30 rounds with an 11-point lead.	**Libertadores:** Colo-Colo, Nublense and (qualifying rounds) Curico Unido and (cup winners) Magallanes. **Sudamericana:** Palestino, Cobresal, Universidad Catolica and Audax Italiano.	**Gustavo QUINTEROS** (Colo-Colo) Argentine-born, played for Bolivia in the 1994 World Cup and has enjoyed a solid coaching career around South America. Took a team that were nearly relegated two years ago to a 33rd title.
Colombia PRIMERA A	Two tournaments, the Apertura and Finalizacion, are played per year. In the first, **Atletico Nacional** beat Tolima 4-3 in the two-legged play-off final, with stoppage-time goals in both legs. In the second, **Deportivo Pereira** beat Medellin on penalties to win their first title.	**Libertadores:** Atletico Nacional and Deportivo Pereira and (qualifying rounds) Millonarios and Independiente Medellin. **Sudamericana:** Tolima, Junior, Santa Fe and Aguilas Doradas.	**David GONZALEZ** (Medellin) The 40-year-old's intelligence was immediately apparent after taking his first coaching job at his old club in June, as he ended the year just a shootout away from the title. Previously spent a few years as a substitute goalkeeper in England.
Ecuador SERIE A	The 16 teams play two league stages, and the winners meet in a two-legged final, where **Aucas** of Quito won their first-ever title with a 1-0 aggregate win over Barcelona of Guayaquil.	**Libertadores:** Independiente del Valle, Aucas, Barcelona and (qualifying rounds) Universidad Catolica and (via the cup) El Nacional. **Sudamericana:** LDU, Emelec, Deportivo Cuenca and Delfin.	**Cesar FARIAS** (Aucas) The Venezuelan is not to everyone's taste, but he is undoubtedly talented. Basing his strategy on the tightest defence in the league, he took one of the founder members of the league to their first title.
Paraguay PRIMERA DIVISION	There are two separate championships in the year, both held on a league basis involving 12 teams. **Libertad** won the Apertura by a seven-point margin, while **Olimpia** claimed the Clausura by a single point.	**Libertadores:** Libertad, Olimpia and (qualifying rounds) Cerro Porteno and Nacional. **Sudamericana:** Guarani, Tacuary, General Caballero (JLM) and Sportivo Ameliano.	**Daniel GARNERO** (Libertad) Libertad fell off in the second half of the year, but Garnero gets the award not only for winning the Apertura, but also for forging a team that was competitive in the Libertadores, narrowly eliminated by one of the finalists.
Peru LIGA 1	The 19 teams play two league campaigns, and the season concluded with a two-legged final between the stage winners, where **Alianza Lima** retained their title, coming from behind to beat Melgar 2-1 on aggregate.	**Libertadores:** Alianza Lima, Melgar and (qualifying rounds) Sporting Cristal and Sport Huancayo. **Sudamericana:** Universitario, Universidad Cesar Vallejo, Cienciano and Binacional.	**Nestor LORENZO** (Melgar) Long-term assistant to fellow Argentine Jose Pekerman who did a fine job in his first solo flight with the club from Arequipa, making them victorious at home and competitive internationally. Now coach of Colombia.
Uruguay PRIMERA DIVISION	A complex, three-stage system boils down to a semi-final where the winners of the two main stages (Liverpool and Nacional) contest the right to meet the team with most points overall (Nacional). After extra-time **Nacional** won 4-1, rendering the final unnecessary.	**Libertadores:** Nacional, Liverpool and (qualifying rounds) Deportivo Maldonado and Boston River. **Sudamericana:** River Plate, Penarol, Defensor and Danubio.	**Jorge BAVA** (Liverpool) Goalkeeper who ended his playing career with Liverpool in 2021 in order to take over as coach. His first full year in charge was the best in the club's 107-year history. Looks to have an interesting future.
Venezuela PRIMERA DIVISION	A league of 16 teams, with the top four going into a mini-league where the best two qualified for a one-off final. Worthy winners were **Metropolitanos** of Caracas, only founded in 2011, who beat Monagas on penalties after a 1-1 draw.	**Libertadores:** Metropolitanos, Monagas and (qualifying rounds) Carabobo and Zamora. **Sudamericana:** Estudiantes de Merida, Caracas, Deportivo Tachira and Puerto Cabello.	**Jose Maria MORR** (Metropolitanos) Former U23 international striker and one-time national team assistant coach. Went solo in 2018 and, in only his second job, crowned a memorably consistent year with a well-deserved title.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR		NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR	NEXT SEASON
Roberto Carlos FERNANDEZ (Bolivar) Attacking left-back or midfielder long seen as a player of promise. Briefly based in Spain, now appears ready to be a key figure for club and country.	 League leaders... The Strongest	**Luis ZEBALLOS** (Oriente Petrolero) Slightly-built attacking midfielder, once on the books of Santos in Brazil, who showed enough technique and confidence to hint at good things to come.	The expectation is to proceed with the Apertura and Clausura format, but there will have to be changes to the former, where the teams are divided into two groups of eight. Because of the turmoil of 2022 there will now be 17 teams.
Juan Martin LUCERO (Colo-Colo) Experienced Argentine number nine who led the line well, giving a platform with his back to goal and ending the campaign as second-top scorer. Enjoyed probably the best season of his career.	 Player of the Year... Juan Lucero	**Alexander ARAVENA** (Nublense) Little support striker who was a shining light in the best-ever season of a traditional club from Chillan. Scored goals and set them up. Began the year as a relative unknown, ended it as a star.	Unchanged. The 16 teams will play a straight league format.
Harlen CASTILLO (Pereira) The 29-year-old goalkeeper was the hero of the Finalizacion penalty shootout. Many, including Tino Asprilla, are tipping him as the successor to David Ospina in the national team.	 Penalty hero... Harlen Castillo	**Daniel RUIZ** (Millonarios) Attacking midfielder who showed promise in 2021 and took it further the following year, showing the creative skills that have led James Rodriguez to point him out as a possible successor in the national team.	No changes are anticipated. The Apertura-Finalizacion format, with the top eight out of 20 teams qualifying for the play-offs, is well established. The only variation is whether the play-offs should start with quarter-finals or two groups of four.
Lorenzo FARAVELLI (Independiente del Valle) Busy and intelligent Argentine midfielder whose excellence was not enough for the club to retain the title, but he played a huge role in the Copa Sudamericana and domestic cup triumphs.	 Copa Sudamericana... Lorenzo Faravelli	**Kevin RODRIGUEZ** (Imbabura) One of the stories of the year: support striker who was top scorer in the team finishing fifth in the second division and ended up winning a last-minute call-up to Ecuador's World Cup squad.	Unchanged. The 16 teams play two separate league stages, with the two winners meeting in the final. Quito heavyweights El Nacional will return to the top flight, and VAR will be used in all matches.
Derlis GONZALEZ (Olimpia) Clever, skilful and experienced little striker who narrowly gets the nod over Libertad's strong left-footed forward Lorenzo Melgarejo. Gonzalez was the key man in his side's Clausura triumph.	 Clausura champions... Olimpia	**Diego GOMEZ** (Libertad) Teenage midfielder in the Paraguayan tradition: strong, competitive, and box-to-box with a fierce shot and an eye for goal. Facing an important consolidation year in 2023.	Unchanged. The Apertura and Clausura format will once again be employed. The year gets underway with the Supercopa, pitting cup winners Ameliano against league winners Olimpia.
Hernan BARCOS (Alianza Lima) The experienced Argentine centre-forward, nicknamed "the Pirate", was once again the most decisive player in the tournament, making his presence and intelligence felt on the big occasions.	 Player of the Year... Hernan Barcos	**Aron SANCHEZ** (Cantolao) Latest product from a club with a fine youth development record. Teenage centre-back who consolidated himself as one of the most promising talents in Peru in 2022 and will surely be moving to a bigger club in 2023.	Unchanged. Apertura and Clausura leagues are played, with the winners – plus teams with most points over the year – contesting the overall title. VAR is being introduced.
Felipe CARBALLO (Nacional) The presence of Luis Suarez in the Nacional line-up for the last few months galvanised the entire championship. But over the course of the year it was the midfield play of Carballo that galvanised the team.	 Local hero... Luis Suarez	**Thiago BORBAS** (River Plate) Third season for the 20-year-old striker and the year when he turned promise into consistency. Tall, rangy and quick, able to operate on the right or through the middle.	Unchanged, although there was a proposal to change the order of the three tournaments, bringing the Intermedio from the middle to the start of the year. This was rejected.
Christian LAROTONDA (Metropolitanos) Central midfielder who was the heartbeat of the champions' campaign, and whose all-round game has won him a place in the national team, where he has been a regular starter since June.	 Champions... Metropolitanos	**Andres FERRO** (Metropolitanos) Classy centre-back, now 21, who had his breakthrough four years after his debut. Was chosen as the revelation of an U23 tournament in France and has now won a call-up to the senior Venezuela squad.	A similar format to 2022 is expected, with 16 teams in a league, the top four playing off for the title and the next eight disputing places in the Copa Sudamericana.

Compiled by Tim Vickery

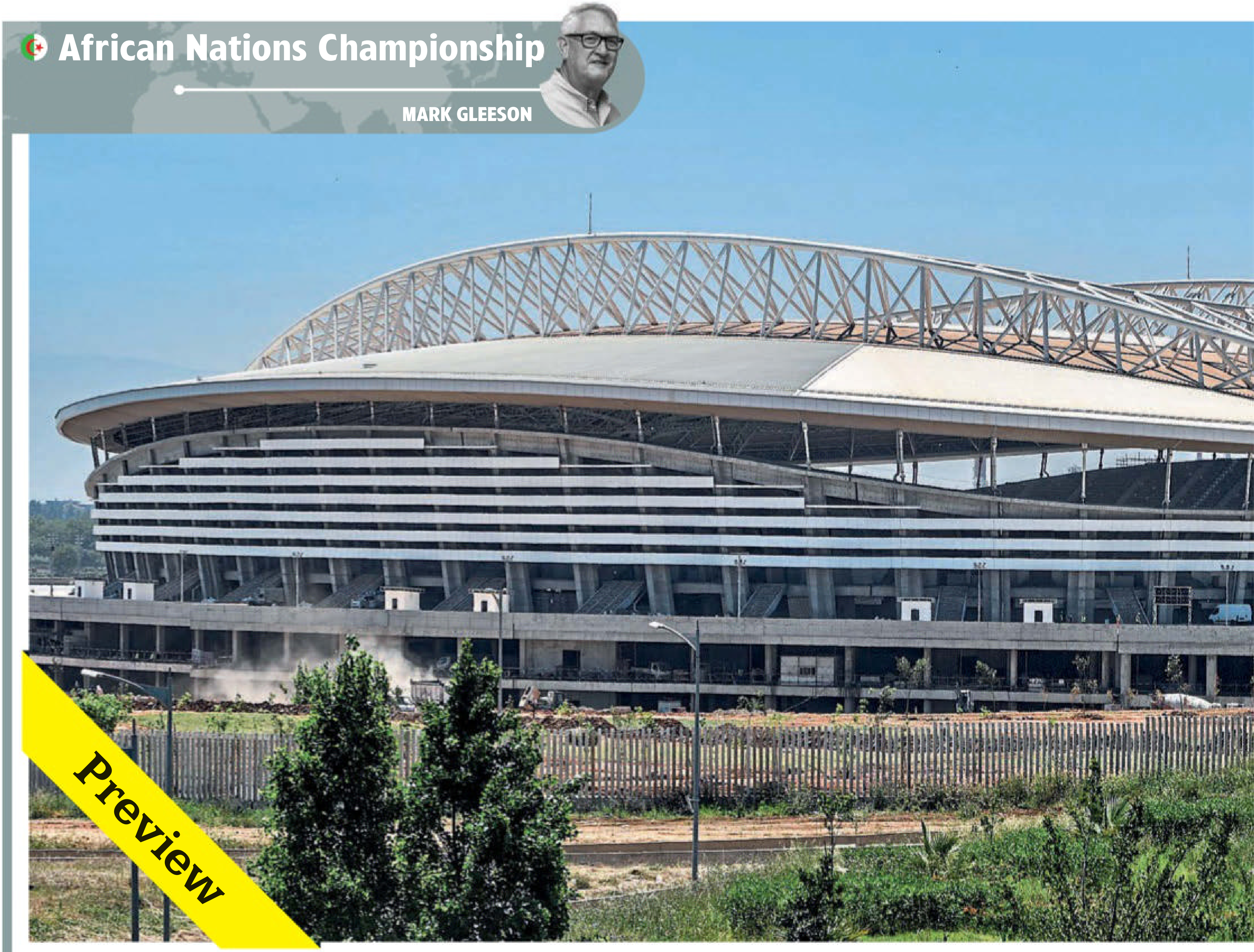
EURO SEASON REVIEW

	LEAGUE CHAMPIONS	TOP SCORER	BEST OF THE REST
Belarus PREMIER LEAGUE *by Nick Bidwell*	**Shakhtyor Soligorsk** continue to maintain their stranglehold on the Belarus league, coming up trumps for the third consecutive year. Such was their superiority on the pitch, they were able to change head coach three times without suffering.	Energetyk-BGU's title challenge – which ended in a creditable second-place finish – relied heavily on the contribution of livewire Uzbek striker **Bobur Abdikholikov**, who netted no fewer than 26 goals in 30 appearances.	For a club of decidedly modest means, Minsk-based Isloch consistently punched above their weight and had good reason to be delighted with their fifth-place finish. One of the youngest squads in the top flight (22.2 years).
Estonia MEISTRILIIGA *by Nick Bidwell*	Estonia's most prestigious club, **Flora Tallinn**, had a walk in the park, finishing the season with a huge 18-point cushion over last year's winners Levadia. Their 14th league title, Flora only lost once all season: a shock 1-0 defeat at Nomme Kalju.	Runners-up Levadia extracted full value from the little Georgian forward **Zakaria Beglarishvili**, who was on the scoresheet 21 times in the Meistriliiga, following on from his 24 goals in 2021. Equally menacing as an attacking midfielder or winger.	The Estonian top flight was no level playing field in 2022. Utter mismatches included Levadia hitting Vaprus for eight without reply in March and Paide Linnameeskond inflicting a 10-0 hammering on Legion seven months later.
Faroe Islands PREMIER LEAGUE *by Nick Bidwell*	If this was a boxing match, the referee would have stopped the fight very early. **KI** finished 19 points clear of their nearest challengers, losing none of their 27 matches and conceding just seven goals to lift their third title in four years.	League runners-up Vikingur were massively dependant on the ability of attacking midfielder **Solvi Vatnhamar** to sneak silently into the box and put away chances with aplomb. Still going strong at the ripe old age of 36.	On a single-season loan from Danish club Esbjerg, 20-year-old striker Mads Borchers not only accumulated goals aplenty for mid-table Vestur, but was also deemed worthy of skippering the side on occasion. Great left foot.
Finland VEIKKAUSLIIGA *by Nick Bidwell*	As most pundits expected, Finland's biggest club **HJK Helsinki** racked up their third consecutive league title, their 32nd in total. Eventual runners-up KuPS were top for most of the regular season, but could not match HJK's quality or experience in the run-in.	Once an unremarkable performer for Leeds United, Ross County and St Mirren, FC Haka's Scottish striker **Lee Erwin** finished top of the scoring charts with 20 goals. The former Scotland youth international was snapped up by Lebanese side Ahed in November.	In a mediocre mid-table VPS side that lost more games than it won, one player stood out: striker Kalle Multanen. His steady supply of goals literally kept VPS up, scoring four times in five starts in the relegation round to end with a grand total of 15.
Georgia EROVNULI LIGA *by Nick Bidwell*	In a tight tussle that went to the last weekend of the season, **Dinamo Tbilisi** edged out holders Dinamo Batumi. Much of Tbilisi's attacking threat came from Guinean winger Ousmane Camara and Dutch creative midfielder Imran Oulad Omar.	Equally devastating as a classic centre-forward, second striker or roving left-winger, Dinamo Batumi's Brazilian ace **Flamarion** topped the Erovnuli Liga scoring charts at a canter, netting 19 times. Diminutive but exceedingly deadly.	Giorgi Mikadze enjoyed a fine first season in charge of Samgurali Tsqaltubo, transforming the flatlining outfit of 2021 into an enterprising, well-drilled top-four side. A couple more points and they would have qualified for Europe.
Iceland URVALSDEILD *by Nick Bidwell*	**Breidablik**, from the town of Kopavogur near Reykjavik, cruised to only the second national title in their history. Their ace in the hole was the attacking trident of Isak Snaer Thorvaldsson, Jason Dadi Svanthorsson and Dagur Dan Thorhallsson.	A threat all along the front line, young forward **Nokkvi Thorisson** could not stop scoring for KA, notching 17 goals from just 20 games. The 23-year-old's form was good enough to earn a move to Belgian side Beerschot in September.	Teenage winger Ari Sigurpalsson regularly turned on the style for Vikingur, catching the eye with speed, ball-skills, goals and assists. The Icelandic youth international spent time in the academy system at Italian outfit Bologna.

	LEAGUE CHAMPIONS	TOP SCORER	BEST OF THE REST
Kazakhstan PREMIER LEAGUE *by Nick Bidwell*	In a tight race for the Premier League title, **FC Astana** leapfrogged closest rivals Aktobe at the death. Astana, the first Kazakh club to play in the Champions League group phase, were flawless in the run-in with five straight victories.	Seasoned Portuguese winger **Pedro Eugenio**, 32, seems to get better with age. As well as his 18 league goals, he also set up many others and was always on hand to inject a note of fantasy in the final third. A major threat with his long-range shooting.	Marseille-born winger Hugo Videmont had his season ended by a nasty knee injury in August but, when he was on the pitch for Aktobe, he often ran riot. With eight goals in 14 matches, he would have challenged Eugenio for the Golden Boot if fit.
Latvia VIRSLIGA *by Nick Bidwell*	For most of the new millennium, **Valmiera** were stagnating in the second tier. But what an impact they have made since regaining a spot in the Virsliga in 2018, twice finishing in the top three before pipping Riga to the 2022 spoils.	Strong, direct and powerful in the air, Valmiera striker **Raimonds Krollis** is the best young player in Latvia. Still only 21 years of age, he has already scored over 50 goals in the Virsliga in his young career, and made 27 appearances for Latvia.	2020 champions Riga appointed their sixth head coach since that last triumph. Yet despite the dugout upheaval, they remain competitive, securing a silver medal and a ticket for the Europa Conference League qualifiers.
Lithuania A LYGA *by Nick Bidwell*	Without having to overly exert themselves, **Zalgiris** completed a hat-trick of A Lyga titles. The Greens, who have won seven of the last ten titles, had a mixed start, but secured the title thanks largely to an an eight-game winning streak in the summer.	Zalgiris' Brazilian striker **Renan Oliveira** may not be the most aesthetically pleasing of players, but he has a Johnny-on-the-spot instinct and can unleash a mean shot with minimal back-lift – as proven by his 17 league goals this season.	All credit to top-flight rookies Siauliai, who gave an excellent account of themselves. Playing in the fourth tier as recently as 2016, they came up with survival as their only goal, yet passed with flying colours as they finished a comfortable seventh.
Norway ELITESERIEN *by Nick Bidwell*	After a few early-season hiccups, **Molde** never looked back after hitting pole position midway through the campaign. Relentlessly consistent, they only lost twice all season and remained unbeaten on the road, winning 13 out of 15.	Tall and wiry Bodo/Glimt forward **Amahl Pellegrino** racked up 25 goals to secure the Golden Boot. Born in Norway to parents from Tanzania, the 32-year-old nominally plays on the left, but was usually found marauding through the middle.	Based in a city (Skien) known for producing timber, Odd were anything but wooden in the 2022 season. After narrowly avoiding relegation in 2021, they were transformed under new coach Pal Arne Johansen, soaring to fifth.
Republic Of Ireland PREMIER DIVISION *by Sean Creedon*	**Shamrock Rovers** won a hat-trick of titles for the first time since 1986, a great achievement for 38-year-old manager Stephen Bradley. In the Conference League group stage they only won two points, but they earned plenty of UEFA money.	With 18 goals, **Aidan Keena** is the first Sligo Rovers player to be top scorer in 55 years. He joined Sligo from Falkirk in January and scored on both his league debut, against St Pat's, and again on his European debut against Bala Town.	Having spent 12 of the last 15 years in the First Division, Shelbourne impressed on their return to the top flight. Damien Duff's young side stayed well clear of the drop and reached the final of the FAI Cup, where they lost 4-0 to Derry City.
Sweden ALLSVENSKAN *by Nick Bidwell*	Superbly marshalled by experienced Norwegian head coach Per-Mathias Hogmo, **BK Hacken** won their first-ever Allsvenskan title. Only beaten twice all season, they sealed it in the best possible way: with a 4-0 win at Gothenburg arch-rivals IFK.	Hacken striker **Alexander Jeremejeff** was in irresistible form, scoring 22 goals in 27 games. Excellent in the timing of his runs and a composed finisher, he returned to Hacken for this third spell in 2021 after failing at Twente.	Newly-promoted Varnamo exceeded all expectations by finishing tenth. Inspired by 20-goal striker Marcus Antonsson – formerly of Blackburn Rovers and Leeds United – they were comfortably clear of the relegation zone in their first top-flight season.

African Nations Championship

MARK GLEESON



The last CHAN?

The 2022 edition of the African Nations Championship, restricted to home-based players, could be the last

The African Nations Championship (CHAN) will get underway in Algeria in January 2023, one year behind schedule because of the knock-on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with its future up in the air.

It will be the seventh edition of the tournament first introduced in 2009 and competed for by quasi-national teams, restricted to home-based players only, but could be consigned to the scrap heap if Africa's Super League ever gets underway.

It was created to give more opportunity to African-based players, given the proliferation, and in some cases total dominance, of overseas-based players in Africa's national teams.

It was also going to provide a test of which were the continent's more competitive leagues, but that has now been rendered meaningless by the fact that all the qualifying matches – and indeed the final tournament – takes place outside of FIFA dates, so clubs in the countries where the professional league are more powerful than the football associations want nothing to do with the competition.

Egypt do not even bother to enter, while South Africa are forced to field a side made up of players that clubs deem surplus to requirements at the time of a CHAN match. In effect they often field a side made up of players unable to get into their respective clubs' matchday squad, scrounged together by desperate football association officials eager to find anyone capable of playing.

This ridicule of what an international is, is made even worse by the insistence on the part of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and FIFA that the CHAN matches be regarded as A internationals – which they are patently not because of the restriction on who can be selected – and that the results count towards the FIFA rankings, rendering their credibility even more dubious.

Hosts Algeria, however, will close down their league for the duration of the tournament and have their best

Newly built...the Baraki Stadium in Algiers will host the opening game and the final

Holders...Morocco won the last African Nations Championship in Cameroon in February 2021

team available, coached by the former Charlton Athletic and Rangers defender Madjid Bougherra.

For almost all of the squad this will be the extent of their international career given how much Algeria's proper national team squad calls upon talent born and based in France.

Algeria will open the tournament with a clash against Libya at the newly-built Baraki Stadium in Algiers and also face Ethiopia and Mozambique.

They have had plenty of practice with no expense spared in arranging fixtures for the Algeria A side – as they are known locally – and they will be well-drilled going into the tournament, which gets underway on January 13.

Holders Morocco, who won the last two tournaments in 2018 and 2021, head Group C against Ghana, Madagascar and Sudan, while the Democratic Republic of Congo – also twice past winners – are top-seeded in Group B alongside Ivory Coast, Senegal and Uganda.

Group D and Group E are made up of three teams each and only the group winners advance after a bizarre decision by CAF to increase the field from 16 to the cumbersome number of 18. It comes as a result of political jostling around more equitable regional representation at the finals. The qualifiers are held on a regional basis across the eight continental sporting zones, from North Africa to the Indian Ocean islands.

> It will be the seventh edition of the tournament…but could be consigned to the scrap heap if Africa's Super League ever gets underway

Group D comprises Mauritania, Angola and Mali, the latter of whom were runners up at the last edition. In Group E, Cameroon compete against Congo and Niger.

Algeria A coach... Madjid Bougherra

Besides Algiers, matches are also scheduled for Annaba, Constantine and Oran as Algeria have refurbished venues for the tournament, and with an eye on hosting a future Africa Cup of Nations finals in 2025.

Senegal are a classic example of how the tournament can benefit local players. Their squads that won the Cup of Nations last year and that went to the World Cup in Qatar did not include a single locally-based outfield player (only fourth-choice keeper Alioune Badara Faty at the AFCON represented their domestic league). It is virtually impossible for any home-based players to get into the team.

But the CHAN offers players a taste of international competition and a showcase for a possible move to greener pastures. The tournament does attract a decent number of scouts from Europe, although they mostly prefer the African junior tournaments in their search for talent.

Besides the host nation, Ghana and Morocco look strong contenders for the title. Ghana upset rivals Nigeria in the qualifiers while Morocco's club sides are among the most successful in African club football and therefore their team is filled with players who have a proven track record in continental competition.

Arabian Gulf Cup

JOHN DUERDEN

International football returns to Iraq

The 25th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup will be played in Basra

Hosts...Iraq players celebrate during the 2019 edition

There have obviously been some bigger tournaments in the Middle East in very recent memory but the 2023 Arabian Gulf Cup is significant for a number of reasons – and not just because this is the 25th edition.

One is that the eight teams, all from the Asian side of the region, will be playing in Iraq from January 6 to 19. It is the first time that the competition has gone to the country since 1979, when the Lions of Mesopotamia lifted the trophy in front of their own fans. It was followed by the Iran-Iraq war, two US-led invasions and years of instability and violence, which made it impossible for the country to host tournaments or even play individual games.

Baghdad is still not seen as ready by FIFA – though plenty in Iraq disagree – and the Gulf Cup will be held in the southern city of Basra. There have been major efforts not just to get the stadiums ready but also to ensure that the other teams are comfortable in coming. All seems well, though there were a few concerns when Australia pulled out

Holders...Bahrain lifted the trophy in Qatar in 2019

of an Asian Under-20 Championship qualifier in the city in August.

Unlike 1979 when Iraq topped a round-robin group of seven, there are two groups of four with the top two going through to the semi-finals. Iraq haven't won since 1988. After a disappointing World Cup qualification campaign where they went through four coaches, including Dick Advocaat, the federation has gone for what it hopes to be a long-term option in Jesus Casas, a former assistant with Spain who has also worked as an analyst for Barcelona. His job is to get the best out of a talented group of players that produced some turgid football on the road to Qatar and are looking for some vision as well as stability.

Oman were far more impressive in the final round of qualification for Qatar, finishing just a point behind Australia and eight above China, with results that included victory in Japan and a draw with the Socceroos. After winning the edition before last in 2018, Croatian head coach Branko Ivankovic, who has the team more disciplined at the back and more clinical and energetic going forward, will be looking for a second title.

Much may depend on Saudi Arabia and what kind of team French coach Herve Renard brings to Basra following their World Cup heroics. The Saudi Professional League paused for the tournament in Qatar over a month before it all kicked off and will resume again during the Gulf Cup, meaning that the Green Falcons will likely struggle to put together their strongest squad.

Group A is completed by Yemen, the outsiders who know what it is like to be unable to play at home. Pre-tournament training in Saudi Arabia should help them rebuild after finishing rock bottom of their 2023 Asian Cup qualification group, though having to play all the games in Mongolia did not help. With some encouraging results at youth level, Yemen may make it difficult for the other three, but it would be a surprise if they made it to the last four.

Qatar are favourites to top Group B but, like Saudi Arabia, are coming off the back of the World Cup. There may well be some kind of hangover and performing in this regional competition could be an anti-climax. It will be a chance, however, to try to bring some new blood into the team that has been together for a few years now. In October, Qatar were given hosting rights to the 2023 Asian Cup after China pulled out and the continental tournament is expected to take place in January 2024. The Gulf Cup will be useful early preparation.

> It is the first time that the competition has gone to Iraq since 1979, when the Lions of Mesopotamia lifted the trophy in front of their own fans

United Arab Emirates missed out on the World Cup after losing to Australia in the Asian play-offs but coach Rodolfo Arruabarrena, appointed last February, is looking to bring some stability and some fresh faces to a team that has relied over the last decade on the creativity of Omar Abdulrahman and goals of Ali Mabkhout.

Bahrain are defending champions but have struggled since and will have to be at their best to get out of the group. The same is true for Kuwait, who are record ten-time winners though only one of those victories have come this century. Both have Portuguese bosses and are looking for a more consistent philosophy across all age groups.

Whoever lifts the trophy, the prize for Iraq off the pitch is a big one as the country returns to hosting international tournaments.

Branko Ivanovic ...Oman coach

Ali Mabkhout...UAE's record goalscorer

Southeast Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

Holders...Thailand won the 2020 AFF Championship

2022 AFF Championship

The Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN) Football Federation's biennial tournament kicked off its 14th edition in December

It wasn't that long ago that Singapore were top dogs in Southeast Asia, the football-loving part of the continent that is home to 650 million and has India to the west and China to the east. The Lions won the AFF Championship, the region's biennial tournament, three times between 2004 and 2012, but they have failed to reach a final in the four editions since, getting out of their group just once.

To make matters worse, their main ASEAN rivals have all qualified for the 2023 Asian Cup that will be played in Qatar in January 2024. Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand have all made it to the continental tournament to give Southeast Asia its biggest representation since 2007 when those four countries co-hosted. Singapore, however, missed out. Their qualification group took place in Kyrgyzstan and when they lost the opening game against the hosts, despite taking a second-half lead, it was always going to be an uphill battle. A subsequent 1-0 defeat to Tajikistan ended any hopes and the last match, a 6-2 thrashing of Myanmar, was nothing more than a consolation.

Those games were the first of coach Takayuki Nishigaya, a Japanese coach who succeeded compatriot Tatsuma

New energy...Indonesia coach Shin Tae-yong

Yoshida in the dugout. Friendlies in September brought a chastening 4-0 defeat to Vietnam and a 1-1 draw with India. Nishigaya's job is to prevent Singapore from slipping down to become a second-tier regional power, but there is much to do. Thailand and Vietnam have made strides over the years with the former reaching the final round of World Cup qualification, which contains just 12 teams, in 2018 and the latter doing the same for 2022.

It is getting a little more difficult for a country with a population of 5.5 million to stay among the big boys, especially with Indonesia – with 275 million people – making strides as well. The headlines in the sprawling archipelago have been depressing ones of late with the stadium disaster in East Java in October resulting in the deaths of 135 fans still casting a deep shadow.

There is hope for the national team though, as there have been signs of major improvement in recent years. Qualifying for the Asian Cup was a huge milestone for what is a young side, especially when the team went to Kuwait and won against a national team that have been champions in the past. With Shin Tae-yong, who won the 2010 Asian Champions League with Seongnam and then led South Korea at the 2018 World Cup, in charge, there is a new energy in what really is one of football's sleeping giants.

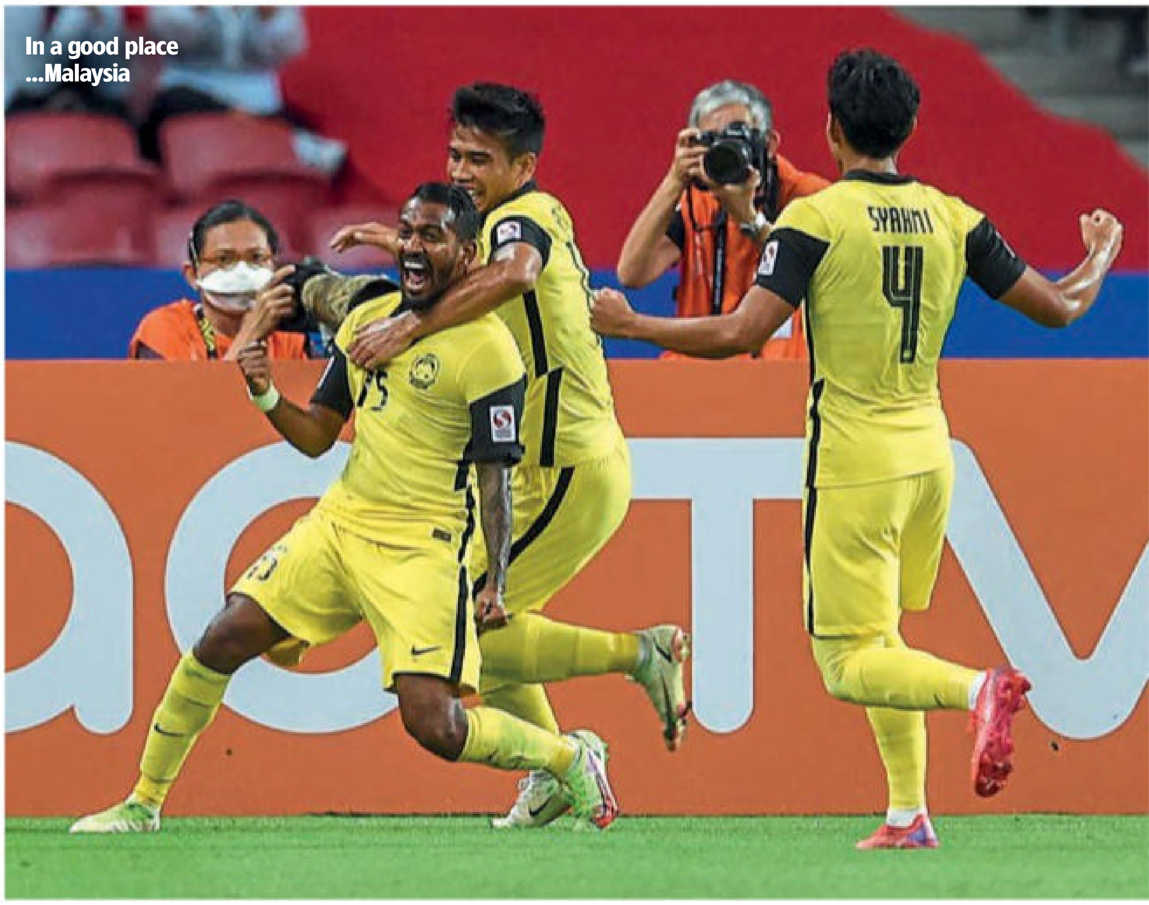
Korean coaches are in vogue. Vietnam have recently overtaken Thailand to become the best in the region under the guidance of Park Hang-seo. The diminutive disciplinarian took the reins in 2017 and although he has injected some steel into a team that has long had talent, there is a feeling that he has taken them as far as he can. In January, this member of Guus Hiddink's 2002 World Cup coaching staff will step down and leave it to someone else to turn Vietnam from a regional power into a continental force.

Asia is so big that there are a number of regional championships…but the one that means the most is the Southeast Asian competition

If Park can deliver his second AFF Championship since taking over as his last act, then he really will leave with the grateful thanks of 98 million. Such a title would be widely celebrated. Asia is so big that there are a number of regional championships, although they are of varying significance for those involved. Neither South Korea nor Japan get too excited about winning the East Asian Championship, but doing badly can have consequences for coaches. South Asia can be a big deal, especially if India struggle, while there is excitement in the west. But the one that means the most is the Southeast Asian competition.

Thailand are six-time champions and it won't be a surprise if the War Elephants make it a magnificent seven, although Vietnam, triumphant in 2010 and 2018, could well lift the trophy for a third time when the second leg of the final takes place on January 16. Malaysia, another team with a South Korean coach in Kim Pan-gon, won in 2010 and are in a good place after securing a place at the Asian Cup for just the second time since 1980, while Myanmar, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos and Brunei make up the field. It is Singapore however, who will be the most desperate for success as 2023 starts, to show the rest of Southeast Asia that the Lions are still a force to be reckoned with.

Pre-tournament clash...Vietnam defeated Singapore 4-0 in September



In a good place ...Malaysia

Laos

STEVE MENARY

Starting from scratch

Football in Laos is being rebuilt after the national team was decimated by a match-fixing scandal

Highly regarded ...Laos winger Bounphachan Bounkong

Not many national team coaches are forced to operate without almost their entire pool of domestic players, but Michael Weiss is making the best of having to rebuild the Laos team.

As the German coach was taking over in January 2022, 45 of the country's leading players – including 30 national team players – were banned for match-fixing. Weiss has had to focus on the youth sides and produced some surprising results.

At the 2022 Asian Football Federation U19 Championship, Laos won their group and then shocked neighbours Thailand 2-0 in the semi-final before losing to Malaysia in the final. The subsequent U20 tournament was less successful, but Laos still beat Guam and ran Yemen and Palestine close.

"People love football here," says Weiss. "The players are very focused on football until 20 or 21, then they have to make a decision on what they want to do. The income is not enough to make a living."

Out of seven clubs in the 2022 Lao Premier League, only two – both from the capital Vientiane – are full-time. Ezra are funded by a Christian church from South Korea. Champions Young Elephants employ most of the remaining national team players, including highly-regarded winger Bounphachan Bounkong.

> The remaining players are part-time and this lack of money makes them financially vulnerable and easy prey for match-fixers. The banned players will never return to a national team that has been completely rebuilt

The remaining players are part-time and this lack of money makes them financially vulnerable and easy prey for match-fixers. Some of the banned players are playing at clubs but will never return to a national team that has been completely rebuilt.

Before taking on Brunei in a friendly in September, which Laos lost 1-0, Weiss was asked why he had brought his U23 team. "We now have a very limited pool of players, most are 25 years or younger," says a phlegmatic Weiss, who has a plan to try to keep the promising younger generation in the game for longer.

He explains: "We have to be more sustainable and find a way to support players through their studies or work so they can still play football.

"We need a pool of 30 players who are employed by the federation or have jobs in the police or wherever. Whether it's possible or not, I don't know. But we are constantly producing young players, mostly U21 and U23. In five years' time, all these players we are developing, will they still be here?"

Weiss has a three-year contract and his immediate priority is the 2022 AFF Championship, where he is targeting at least one win in a tough group with Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Myanmar, but his real ambitions lie with the 2023 Southeast Asian Games in Cambodia.

He adds: "The president promised me a training camp in Japan. With good preparations, maybe we can go for a medal."

Star man...Billy Ketkeophomphone

His young Laos squad will gain experience at the AFF Championship and also benefit from the return of Billy Ketkeophomphone. Born in France, the striker had a decade of experience there including spells at Tours, Angers and Auxerre before moving in January 2022 to Malaysian club Sri Pahang, where he was beset by injuries.

Ketkeophomphone is regaining fitness ahead of a likely move to Thailand and should be ready to lead the Laos line at the Southeast Asian Games and help Weiss' young charges take the next step up.

DECEMBER 30-JANUARY 20

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

Bundesliga bounces back

The German top flight will have been away for ten weeks by the time it resumes on Friday, January 20. Leaders Bayern Munich kick things off with a visit to third-placed RB Leipzig, while the high-flying surprise package Freiburg meet Wolfsburg a day later. With just nine points separating the top six clubs, it promises to be a fascinating second half to the campaign.

A Ligue 1 title race?

In France, Ligue 1 resumes in December, but all eyes will be on the top-of-the-table clash between Lens and Paris Saint-Germain on New Year's Day. Unbeaten PSG have a five-point cushion over Franck Haise's side, who won five consecutive games before the World Cup break. Lens need a positive result to keep the Ligue 1 title race alive in 2023.

Team to beat...
Paris Saint-Germain

Saudi Super Cups

Saudi Arabia will host the finals of both the Spanish and Italian Super Cups. First, Real Madrid face Valencia and Real Betis take on Barcelona in the semi-finals of the Spanish edition ahead of the final on January 15. Then, three days later, city rivals Internazionale and Milan also face off in Riyadh in the Italian version.

Holders...Inter won last year's Super Coppa

Coupe de France

Once again, the French Cup has thrown up an improbable yet fascinating fixture. This time La Tamponnaise will travel thousands of miles, from the Indian Ocean island of Reunion to the south of France, to face fourth-tier side RC Grasse in the round of 64. The big boys also join the competition at this stage, with Paris Saint-Germain visiting third-tier side Chateauroux and Marseille travelling along the Cote d'Azur to face fourth-tier Hyeres.

Serie A returns

The Italian top flight resumes on Wednesday, January 4 with a full set of fixtures. The standout clash is between 2020-21 champions Inter and league leaders Napoli, who begin 2023 with an eight-point lead at the top of the table ahead of reigning champions Milan, and the chance to win their first *Scudetto* since 1990.

FA Cup third round

One of the most famous matchdays in the English football calendar, the third round of the FA Cup, takes place on the weekend of January 7. Manchester City host Chelsea in the round's most glamorous tie, while at the other end of the football pyramid non-league side Boreham Wood – the competition's lowest-ranked team – will hope to extend their run when they host Accrington Stanley.

5 unmissable matches

- **Arsenal v Newcastle United, January 3**
  Prior to the World Cup, these were two of the Premier League's most in-form teams. This will be a stern test for both sides, with Arsenal hoping to remain in the title fight and Newcastle putting their top-four credentials to the test.
- **Atletico Madrid v Barcelona, January 8**
  A poor start to the season left Atletico Madrid outside La Liga's top four and Diego Simeone facing questions over his future. How they fare against the league leaders will indicate whether there is life in the Argentine yet.
- **Real Sociedad v Athletic Bilbao, January 14**
  These days, the Basque derby is more than just a local rivalry – it's a battle for Champions League football. The two sides returned to league action lying in third and fourth place respectively, and will be desperate for a result here.
- **Manchester United v Manchester City, January 14**
  If it's anything like the first Manchester derby of the season, then this fixture promises goals aplenty. How Erik ten Hag reacts to United's 6-3 defeat at the Etihad in October will be fascinating.

Demolition...Erling Haaland scored a hat-trick in the first Manchester derby of the campaign

- **Benfica v Sporting, January 15**
  The Lisbon derby usually provides an intense atmosphere and plenty of drama. Benfica are in danger of running away with the league title after 12 wins in their first 13 games, but Sporting will want to put to a stop to that.

WORLD CUP 2022

ARGENTINA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Franco **ARMANI**	(36) 16.10.86	River Plate
12	Geronimo **RULLI**	(30) 20.05.92	Villarreal (Spa)
23	Emiliano **MARTINEZ**	(30) 02.09.92	Aston Villa (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Juan **FOYTH**	(24) 12.01.98	Villarreal (Spa)
3	Nicolas **TAGLIAFICO**	(30) 31.08.92	Lyon (Fra)
4	Gonzalo **MONTIEL**	(25) 01.01.97	Sevilla (Spa)
6	German **PEZZELLA**	(31) 27.06.91	Real Betis (Spa)
8	Marcos **ACUNA**	(31) 28.10.91	Sevilla (Spa)
13	Cristian **ROMERO**	(24) 27.04.98	Tottenham (Eng)
19	Nicolas **OTAMENDI**	(34) 12.02.88	Benfica (Por)
25	Lisandro **MARTINEZ**	(24) 18.01.98	Manchester Utd (Eng)
26	Nahuel **MOLINA**	(24) 06.04.98	Atletico Madrid (Spa)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Leandro **PAREDES**	(28) 29.06.94	Juventus (Ita)
7	Rodrigo **DE PAUL**	(28) 24.05.94	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
14	Exequiel **PALACIOS**	(24) 05.10.98	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
16	Thiago **ALMADA**	(21) 26.04.01	Atlanta Utd (USA)
18	Guido **RODRIGUEZ**	(28) 12.04.94	Real Betis (Spa)
20	Alexis **MAC ALLISTER**	(23) 24.12.98	Brighton (Eng)
24	Enzo **FERNANDEZ**	(21) 17.01.01	Benfica (Por)

FORWARDS

9	Julian **ALVAREZ**	(22) 31.01.00	Manchester City (Eng)
10	Lionel **MESSI**	(35) 24.06.87	PSG (Fra)
11	Angel **DI MARIA**	(34) 14.02.88	Juventus (Ita)
15	Angel **CORREA**	(27) 09.03.95	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
17	Papu **GOMEZ**	(34) 15.02.88	Sevilla (Spa)
21	Paulo **DYBALA**	(29) 15.11.93	Roma (Ita)
22	Lautaro **MARTINEZ**	(25) 22.08.97	Internazionale (Ita)

COACH

Lionel **SCALONI**	(44) 16.05.78

AUSTRALIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mathew **RYAN**	(30) 08.04.92	Copenhagen (Den)
12	Andrew **REDMAYNE**	(33) 13.01.89	Sydney FC
18	Danny **VUKOVIC**	(37) 27.03.85	Central Coast Mariners

DEFENDERS

2	Milos **DEGENEK**	(28) 28.04.94	Columbus Crew (USA)
3	Nathaniel **ATKINSON**	(23) 13.06.99	Hearts (Sco)
4	Kye **ROWLES**	(24) 24.06.98	Hearts (Sco)
5	Fran **KARACIC**	(26) 12.05.96	Brescia (Ita)
8	Bailey **WRIGHT**	(30) 28.07.92	Sunderland (Eng)
16	Aziz **BEHICH**	(31) 16.12.90	Dundee Utd (Sco)
19	Harry **SOUTTAR**	(24) 22.10.98	Stoke City (Eng)
20	Thomas **DENG**	(25) 20.03.97	Albirex Niigata (Jpn)
24	Joel **KING**	(22) 30.10.00	OB (Den)

MIDFIELDERS

10	Ajdin **HRUSTIC**	(26) 05.07.96	Hellas Verona (Ita)
13	Aaron **MOOY**	(32) 15.09.90	Celtic (Sco)
14	Riley **McGREE**	(24) 02.11.98	Middlesbrough (Eng)
17	Cameron **DEVLIN**	(24) 07.06.98	Hearts (Sco)
22	Jackson **IRVINE**	(29) 07.03.93	St Pauli (Ger)
23	Craig **GOODWIN**	(30) 16.12.91	Adelaide Utd
26	Keanu **BACCUS**	(24) 07.06.98	St Mirren (Sco)

FORWARDS

6	Marco **TILLIO**	(21) 23.08.01	Melbourne City
7	Mathew **LECKIE**	(31) 04.02.91	Melbourne City
9	Jamie **MACLAREN**	(29) 29.07.93	Melbourne City
11	Awer **MABIL**	(27) 15.09.95	Cadiz (Spa)
15	Mitchell **DUKE**	(31) 18.01.91	Fagiano Okayama (Jpn)
21	Garang **KUOL**	(18) 15.09.04	Central Coast Mariners
25	Jason **CUMMINGS**	(27) 01.08.95	Central Coast Mariners

COACH

Graham **ARNOLD**	(59) 03.08.63

BELGIUM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Thibaut **COURTOIS**	(30) 11.05.92	Real Madrid (Spa)
12	Simon **MIGNOLET**	(34) 06.03.88	Club Brugge
13	Koen **CASTEELS**	(30) 25.06.92	Wolfsburg (Ger)

DEFENDERS

2	Toby **ALDERWEIRELD**	(33) 02.03.89	Antwerp
3	Arthur **THEATE**	(22) 25.05.00	Rennes (Fra)
4	Wout **FAES**	(24) 03.04.98	Leicester City (Eng)
5	Jan **VERTONGHEN**	(35) 24.04.87	Anderlecht
15	Thomas **MEUNIER**	(31) 12.09.91	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
21	Timothy **CASTAGNE**	(26) 05.12.95	Leicester City (Eng)
26	Zeno **DEBAST**	(19) 24.10.03	Anderlecht

MIDFIELDERS

6	Axel **WITSEL**	(33) 12.01.89	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
7	Kevin **DE BRUYNE**	(31) 28.06.91	Manchester City (Eng)
8	Youri **TIELEMANS**	(25) 07.05.97	Leicester City (Eng)
11	Yannick **CARRASCO**	(29) 04.09.93	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
16	Thorgan **HAZARD**	(29) 29.03.93	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
18	Amadou **ONANA**	(21) 16.08.01	Everton (Eng)
19	Leander **DENDONCKER**	(27) 15.04.95	Aston Villa (Eng)
20	Hans **VANAKEN**	(30) 24.08.92	Club Brugge

FORWARDS

9	Romelu **LUKAKU**	(29) 13.05.93	Internazionale (Ita)
10	Eden **HAZARD**	(31) 07.01.91	Real Madrid (Spa)
14	Dries **MERTENS**	(35) 06.05.87	Galatasaray (Tur)
17	Leandro **TROSSARD**	(27) 04.12.94	Brighton (Eng)
22	Charles **DE KETELAERE**	(21) 10.03.01	Milan (Ita)
23	Michy **BATSHUAYI**	(29) 02.10.93	Fenerbahce (Tur)
24	Lois **OPENDA**	(22) 16.02.00	Lens (Fra)
25	Jeremy **DOKU**	(20) 27.05.02	Rennes (Fra)

COACH

Roberto **MARTINEZ** (Spa)	(49) 13.07.73

BRAZIL

GOALKEEPERS

1	**ALISSON**	(30) 02.10.92	Liverpool (Eng)
12	**WEVERTON**	(34) 13.12.87	Palmeiras
23	**EDERSON**	(29) 17.08.93	Manchester City (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	**DANILO**	(31) 15.07.91	Juventus (Ita)
3	**THIAGO SILVA**	(38) 22.09.84	Chelsea (Eng)
4	**MARQUINHOS**	(28) 14.05.94	PSG (Fra)
6	**ALEX SANDRO**	(31) 26.01.91	Juventus (Ita)
13	**DANI ALVES**	(39) 06.05.83	UNAM Pumas (Mex)
14	**EDER MILITAO**	(24) 18.01.98	Real Madrid (Spa)
16	**ALEX TELLES**	(29) 15.12.92	Sevilla (Spa)
24	**BREMER**	(25) 18.03.97	Juventus (Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

5	**CASEMIRO**	(30) 23.02.92	Manchester Utd (Eng)
7	**LUCAS PAQUETA**	(25) 27.08.97	West Ham Utd (Eng)
8	**FRED**	(29) 05.03.93	Manchester Utd (Eng)
15	**FABINHO**	(29) 23.10.93	Liverpool (Eng)
17	**BRUNO GUIMARAES**	(25) 16.11.97	Newcastle Utd (Eng)
22	**EVERTON RIBEIRO**	(33) 10.04.89	Flamengo

FORWARDS

9	**RICHARLISON**	(25) 10.05.97	Tottenham (Eng)
10	**NEYMAR**	(30) 05.02.92	PSG (Fra)
11	**RAPHINHA**	(25) 14.12.96	Barcelona (Spa)
18	**GABRIEL JESUS**	(25) 03.04.97	Arsenal (Eng)
19	**ANTONY**	(22) 24.02.00	Manchester Utd (Eng)
20	**VINICIUS JUNIOR**	(22) 12.07.00	Real Madrid (Spa)
21	**RODRYGO**	(21) 09.01.01	Real Madrid (Spa)
25	**PEDRO**	(25) 20.06.97	Flamengo
26	Gabriel **MARTINELLI**	(21) 18.06.01	Arsenal (Eng)

COACH

TITE	(61) 25.05.61

CAMEROON

GOALKEEPERS

1	Simon **NGAPANDOUETNBU**	(19) 12.04.03	Marseille (Fra)
16	Devis **EPASSY**	(29) 02.02.93	Abha (KSA)
23	Andre **ONANA**	(26) 02.04.96	Internazionale (Ita)

DEFENDERS

3	Nicolas **NKOULOU**	(32) 27.03.90	Aris (Gre)
4	Christopher **WOOH**	(21) 18.09.01	Rennes (Fra)
17	Olivier **MBAIZO**	(25) 15.08.97	Philadelphia Union (USA)
19	Collins **FAI**	(30) 13.08.92	Al Tai (KSA)
21	Jean-Charles **CASTELLETTO**	(27) 26.01.95	Nantes (Fra)
24	Enzo **EBOSSE**	(23) 11.03.99	Udinese (Ita)
25	**NOUHOU** Tolo	(25) 23.06.97	Seattle Sounders (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Jerome **NGOM**	(24) 30.09.98	Colombe Sportive
5	Gael **ONDOUA**	(27) 04.11.95	Hannover (Ger)
8	Andre-Frank **ZAMBO ANGUISSA**	(27) 16.11.95	Napoli (Ita)
14	Samuel **OUM GOUET**	(24) 14.12.97	Mechelen (Bel)
15	Pierre **KUNDE**	(27) 26.07.95	Olympiakos (Gre)
18	Martin **HONGLA**	(24) 16.03.98	Hellas Verona (Ita)
22	Olivier **NTCHAM**	(26) 09.02.96	Swansea City (Wal)

FORWARDS

6	Moumi **NGAMALEU**	(28) 09.07.94	Dynamo Moscow (Rus)
7	Georges-Kevin **NKOUDOU**	(27) 13.02.95	Besiktas (Tur)
9	Jean-Pierre **NSAME**	(29) 01.05.93	Young Boys (Sui)
10	Vincent **ABOUBAKAR**	(30) 22.01.92	Al Nassr (KSA)
11	Christian **BASSOGOG**	(27) 18.10.95	Shanghai Shenhua (Chn)
12	Karl **TOKO EKAMBI**	(30) 14.09.92	Lyon (Fra)
13	Eric Maxim **CHOUPO-MOTING**	(33) 23.03.89	Bayern Munich (Ger)
20	Bryan **MBEUMO**	(23) 07.08.99	Brentford (Eng)
26	Souaibou **MAROU**	(21) 03.12.00	Coton Sport

COACH

Rigobert **SONG**	(46) 01.07.76

CANADA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Dayne **ST CLAIR**	(25) 09.05.97	Minnesota Utd (USA)
16	James **PANTEMIS**	(25) 21.02.97	CF Montreal
18	Milan **BORJAN**	(35) 23.10.87	Red Star Belgrade (Srb)

DEFENDERS

2	Alistair **JOHNSTON**	(24) 08.10.98	CF Montreal
3	Sam **ADEKUGBE**	(27) 16.01.95	Hatayspor (Tur)
4	Kamal **MILLER**	(25) 16.05.97	CF Montreal
5	Steven **VITORIA**	(35) 11.01.87	Chaves (Por)
22	Richie **LARYEA**	(27) 07.01.95	Toronto FC
25	Derek **CORNELIUS**	(24) 25.11.97	Panetolikos (Gre)
26	Joel **WATERMAN**	(26) 24.01.96	CF Montreal

MIDFIELDERS

6	Samuel **PIETTE**	(28) 12.11.94	CF Montreal
7	Stephen **EUSTAQUIO**	(25) 21.12.96	Porto (Por)
8	Liam **FRASER**	(24) 13.02.98	Deinze (Bel)
13	Atiba **HUTCHINSON**	(39) 08.02.83	Besiktas (Tur)
14	Mark-Anthony **KAYE**	(27) 02.12.94	Toronto FC
15	Ismael **KONE**	(20) 16.06.02	CF Montreal
21	Jonathan **OSORIO**	(30) 12.06.92	Toronto FC
23	Liam **MILLAR**	(23) 27.09.99	Basel (Sui)
24	David **WOTHERSPOON**	(32) 16.01.90	St Johnstone (Sco)

FORWARDS

9	Lucas **CAVALLINI**	(29) 28.12.92	Vancouver Whitecaps
10	Junior **HOILETT**	(32) 05.06.90	Reading (Eng)
11	Tajon **BUCHANAN**	(23) 08.02.99	Club Brugge (Bel)
12	Ike **UGBO**	(24) 21.09.98	Troyes (Fra)
17	Cyle **LARIN**	(27) 17.04.95	Club Brugge (Bel)
19	Alphonso **DAVIES**	(22) 02.11.00	Bayern Munich (Ger)
20	Jonathan **DAVID**	(22) 14.01.00	Lille (Fra)

COACH

John **HERDMAN** (Eng)	(47) 19.07.75

COSTA RICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Keylor **NAVAS**	(35) 15.12.86	PSG (Fra)
18	Esteban **ALVARADO**	(33) 28.04.89	Herediano
23	Patrick **SEQUEIRA**	(23) 01.03.99	Lugo (Spa)

DEFENDERS

3	Juan Pablo **VARGAS**	(27) 06.06.95	Millonarios (Col)
4	Keysher **FULLER**	(28) 12.07.94	Herediano
6	Oscar **DUARTE**	(33) 03.06.89	Al Wehda (KSA)
8	Bryan **OVIEDO**	(32) 18.02.90	Real Salt Lake (USA)
15	Francisco **CALVO**	(30) 08.07.92	Konyaspor (Tur)
16	Carlos **MARTINEZ**	(23) 30.03.99	San Carlos
19	Kendall **WASTON**	(34) 01.01.88	Saprissa
22	Ronald **MATARRITA**	(28) 09.07.94	FC Cincinnati (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Daniel **CHACON**	(21) 11.04.01	Cartagines
5	Celso **BORGES**	(34) 27.05.88	Alajuelense
10	Bryan **RUIZ**	(37) 18.08.85	Alajuelense
13	Gerson **TORRES**	(25) 28.08.97	Herediano
14	Youstin **SALAS**	(26) 17.06.96	Saprissa
17	Yeltsin **TEJEDA**	(30) 17.03.92	Herediano
20	Brandon **AGUILERA**	(19) 28.06.03	Guanacasteca
21	Douglas **LOPEZ**	(24) 21.09.98	Herediano
24	Roan **WILSON**	(20) 01.05.02	Municipal Grecia
25	Anthony **HERNANDEZ**	(21) 11.10.01	Puntarenas
26	Alvaro **ZAMORA**	(20) 09.03.02	Saprissa

FORWARDS

7	Anthony **CONTRERAS**	(22) 29.01.00	Herediano
9	Jewison **BENNETTE**	(18) 15.06.04	Sunderland (Eng)
11	Johan **VENEGAS**	(33) 27.11.88	Alajuelense
12	Joel **CAMPBELL**	(30) 26.06.92	Leon (Mex)

COACH

Luis Fernando **SUAREZ** (Col)	(62) 23.12.59

CROATIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Dominik **LIVAKOVIC**	(27) 09.01.95	Dinamo Zagreb
12	Ivo **GRBIC**	(26) 18.01.96	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
23	Ivica **IVUSIC**	(27) 01.02.95	Osijek

DEFENDERS

2	Josip **STANISIC**	(22) 02.04.00	Bayern Munich (Ger)
3	Borna **BARISIC**	(30) 10.11.92	Rangers (Sco)
5	Martin **ERLIC**	(24) 24.01.98	Sassuolo (Ita)
6	Dejan **LOVREN**	(33) 05.07.89	Zenit (Rus)
19	Borna **SOSA**	(24) 21.01.98	Stuttgart (Ger)
20	Josko **GVARDIOL**	(20) 23.01.02	RB Leipzig (Ger)
21	Domagoj **VIDA**	(33) 29.04.89	AEK Athens (Gre)
22	Josip **JURANOVIC**	(27) 16.08.95	Celtic (Sco)
24	Josip **SUTALO**	(22) 28.02.00	Dinamo Zagreb

MIDFIELDERS

7	Lovro **MAJER**	(24) 17.01.98	Rennes (Fra)
8	Mateo **KOVACIC**	(28) 06.05.94	Chelsea (Eng)
10	Luka **MODRIC**	(37) 09.09.85	Real Madrid (Spa)
11	Marcelo **BROZOVIC**	(30) 16.11.92	Internazionale (Ita)
13	Nikola **VLASIC**	(25) 04.10.97	Torino (Ita)
15	Mario **PASALIC**	(27) 09.02.95	Atalanta (Ita)
25	Luka **SUCIC**	(20) 08.09.02	RB Salzburg (Aut)
26	Kristijan **JAKIC**	(25) 14.05.97	Eintract Frankfurt (Ger)

FORWARDS

4	Ivan **PERISIC**	(33) 02.02.89	Tottenham (Eng)
9	Andrej **KRAMARIC**	(31) 19.06.91	Hoffenheim (Ger)
14	Marko **LIVAJA**	(29) 26.08.93	Hajduk Split
16	Bruno **PETKOVIC**	(28) 16.09.94	Dinamo Zagreb
17	Ante **BUDIMIR**	(31) 22.07.91	Osasuna (Spa)
18	Mislav **ORSIC**	(29) 29.12.92	Dinamo Zagreb

COACH

Zlatko **DALIC**	(56) 26.10.66

DENMARK

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kasper **SCHMEICHEL**	(36) 05.11.86	Nice (Fra)
16	Oliver **CHRISTENSEN**	(23) 22.03.99	Hertha Berlin (Ger)
22	Frederik **RONNOW**	(30) 04.08.92	Union Berlin (Ger)

DEFENDERS

2	Joachim **ANDERSEN**	(26) 31.05.96	Crystal Palace (Eng)
3	Victor **NELSSON**	(24) 14.10.98	Galatasaray (Tur)
4	Simon **KJAER**	(33) 26.03.89	Milan (Ita)
5	Joakim **MAEHLE**	(25) 20.05.97	Atalanta (Ita)
6	Andreas **CHRISTENSEN**	(26) 10.04.96	Barcelona (Spa)
13	Rasmus **KRISTENSEN**	(25) 11.07.97	Leeds Utd (Eng)
17	Jens **STRYGER LARSEN**	(31) 21.02.91	Trabzonspor (Tur)
18	Daniel **WASS**	(33) 31.05.89	Brondby
26	Alexander **BAH**	(24) 09.12.97	Benfica (Por)

MIDFIELDERS

7	Mathias **JENSEN**	(26) 01.01.96	Brentford (Eng)
8	Thomas **DELANEY**	(31) 03.09.91	Sevilla (Spa)
10	Christian **ERIKSEN**	(30) 14.02.92	Manchester Utd (Eng)
14	Mikkel **DAMSGAARD**	(22) 03.07.00	Brentford (Eng)
15	Christian **NORGAARD**	(28) 10.03.94	Brentford (Eng)
23	Pierre-Emile **HOJBJERG**	(27) 05.08.95	Tottenham (Eng)
25	Jesper **LINDSTROM**	(22) 29.02.00	Eintract Frankfurt (Ger)

FORWARDS

9	Martin **BRAITHWAITE**	(31) 05.06.91	Espanyol (Spa)
11	Andreas **SKOV OLSEN**	(22) 29.12.99	Club Brugge (Bel)
12	Kasper **DOLBERG**	(25) 06.10.97	Sevilla (Spa)
19	Jonas **WIND**	(23) 07.02.99	Wolfsburg (Ger)
20	Yussuf **POULSEN**	(28) 15.06.94	RB Leipzig (Ger)
21	Andreas **CORNELIUS**	(29) 16.03.93	Copenhagen
24	Robert **SKOV**	(26) 20.05.96	Hoffenheim (Ger)

COACH

Kasper **HJULMAND**	(50) 09.04.72

ECUADOR

GOALKEEPERS

1	Hernan **GALINDEZ**	(35) 30.03.87	Aucas
12	Moises **RAMIREZ**	(22) 09.09.00	Independiente del Valle
22	Alexander **DOMINGUEZ**	(35) 05.06.87	LDU Quito

DEFENDERS

2	Felix **TORRES**	(25) 11.01.97	Santos Laguna (Mex)
3	Piero **HINCAPIE**	(20) 09.01.02	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
4	Robert **ARBOLEDA**	(31) 22.10.91	Sao Paulo (Bra)
6	William **PACHO**	(21) 16.10.01	Antwerp (Bel)
7	Pervis **ESTUPINAN**	(24) 21.01.98	Brighton (Eng)
14	Xavier **ARREAGA**	(28) 28.09.94	Seattle Sounders (USA)
17	Angelo **PRECIADO**	(24) 18.02.98	Genk (Bel)
18	Diego **PALACIOS**	(23) 12.07.99	LAFC (USA)
25	Jackson **POROZO**	(22) 04.08.00	Troyes (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Jose **CIFUENTES**	(23) 12.03.99	LAFC (USA)
8	Carlos **GRUEZO**	(27) 19.04.95	Augsburg (Ger)
15	Angel **MENA**	(34) 21.01.88	Leon (Mex)
16	Jeremy **SARMIENTO**	(20) 16.06.02	Brighton (Eng)
19	Gonzalo **PLATA**	(22) 01.11.00	Real Valladolid (Spa)
20	Jhegson **MENDEZ**	(25) 26.04.97	LAFC (USA)
21	Alan **FRANCO**	(24) 21.08.98	Talleres (Arg)
23	Moises **CAICEDO**	(21) 02.11.01	Brighton (Eng)

FORWARDS

9	Ayrton **PRECIADO**	(28) 17.07.94	Santos Laguna (Mex)
10	Romario **IBARRA**	(28) 24.09.94	Pachuca (Mex)
11	Michael **ESTRADA**	(26) 07.04.96	Cruz Azul (Mex)
13	Enner **VALENCIA**	(33) 04.11.89	Fenerbahce (Tur)
24	Djorkaeff **REASCO**	(23) 18.01.99	Newell's Old Boys (Arg)
26	Kevin **RODRIGUEZ**	(22) 04.03.00	Imbabura

COACH

Gustavo **ALFARO** (Arg)	(60) 14.08.62

ENGLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jordan **PICKFORD**	(28) 07.03.94	Everton
13	Nick **POPE**	(30) 19.04.92	Newcastle Utd
23	Aaron **RAMSDALE**	(24) 14.05.98	Arsenal

DEFENDERS

2	Kyle **WALKER**	(32) 28.05.90	Manchester City
3	Luke **SHAW**	(27) 12.07.95	Manchester Utd
5	John **STONES**	(28) 28.05.94	Manchester City
6	Harry **MAGUIRE**	(29) 05.03.93	Manchester Utd
12	Kieran **TRIPPIER**	(32) 19.09.90	Newcastle Utd
15	Eric **DIER**	(28) 15.01.94	Tottenham
16	Conor **COADY**	(29) 25.02.93	Everton
18	Trent **ALEXANDER-ARNOLD**	(24) 07.10.98	Liverpool
21	Ben **WHITE**	(25) 08.10.97	Arsenal

MIDFIELDERS

4	Declan **RICE**	(23) 14.01.99	West Ham Utd
8	Jordan **HENDERSON**	(32) 17.06.90	Liverpool
14	Kalvin **PHILLIPS**	(26) 02.12.95	Manchester City
19	Mason **MOUNT**	(23) 10.01.99	Chelsea
22	Jude **BELLINGHAM**	(19) 29.06.03	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
25	James **MADDISON**	(25) 23.11.96	Leicester City
26	Conor **GALLAGHER**	(22) 06.02.00	Chelsea

FORWARDS

7	Jack **GREALISH**	(27) 10.09.95	Manchester City
9	Harry **KANE**	(29) 28.07.93	Tottenham
10	Raheem **STERLING**	(27) 08.12.94	Chelsea
11	Marcus **RASHFORD**	(25) 31.10.97	Manchester Utd
17	Bukayo **SAKA**	(21) 05.09.01	Arsenal
20	Phil **FODEN**	(22) 28.05.00	Manchester City
24	Callum **WILSON**	(30) 27.02.92	Newcastle Utd

COACH

Gareth **SOUTHGATE**	(52) 03.09.70

FRANCE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Hugo **LLORIS**	(35) 26.12.86	Tottenham (Eng)
16	Steve **MANDANDA**	(37) 28.03.85	Rennes
23	Alphonse **AREOLA**	(29) 27.02.93	West Ham Utd (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Benjamin **PAVARD**	(26) 28.03.96	Bayern Munich (Ger)
3	Axel **DISASI**	(24) 11.03.98	Monaco
4	Raphael **VARANE**	(29) 25.04.93	Manchester Utd (Eng)
5	Jules **KOUNDE**	(24) 12.11.98	Barcelona (Spa)
17	William **SALIBA**	(21) 24.03.01	Arsenal (Eng)
18	Dayot **UPAMECANO**	(24) 27.10.98	Bayern Munich (Ger)
21	Lucas **HERNANDEZ**	(26) 14.02.96	Bayern Munich (Ger)
22	Theo **HERNANDEZ**	(25) 06.10.97	Milan (Ita)
24	Ibrahima **KONATE**	(23) 25.05.99	Liverpool (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Matteo **GUENDOUZI**	(23) 14.04.99	Marseille
8	Aurelien **TCHOUAMENI**	(22) 27.01.00	Real Madrid (Spa)
13	Youssouf **FOFANA**	(23) 10.01.99	Monaco
14	Adrien **RABIOT**	(27) 03.04.95	Juventus (Ita)
15	Jordan **VERETOUT**	(29) 01.03.93	Marseille
25	Eduardo **CAMAVINGA**	(20) 10.11.02	Real Madrid (Spa)

FORWARDS

7	Antoine **GRIEZMANN**	(31) 21.03.91	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
9	Olivier **GIROUD**	(36) 30.09.86	Milan (Ita)
10	Kylian **MBAPPE**	(23) 20.12.98	PSG
11	Ousmane **DEMBELE**	(25) 15.05.97	Barcelona (Spa)
12	Randal **KOLO MUANI**	(23) 05.12.98	Eintract Frankfurt (Ger)
19	Karim **BENZEMA**	(34) 19.12.87	Real Madrid (Spa)
20	Kingsley **COMAN**	(26) 13.06.96	Bayern Munich (Ger)
26	Marcus **THURAM**	(25) 06.08.97	B. M'gladbach (Ger)

COACH

Didier **DESCHAMPS**	(54) 15.10.68

GERMANY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Manuel **NEUER**	(36) 27.03.86	Bayern Munich
12	Kevin **TRAPP**	(32) 08.07.90	Eintract Frankfurt
22	Marc-Andre **TER STEGEN**	(30) 30.04.92	Barcelona (Spa)

DEFENDERS

2	Antonio **RUDIGER**	(29) 03.03.93	Real Madrid (Spa)
3	David **RAUM**	(24) 22.04.98	RB Leipzig
4	Matthias **GINTER**	(28) 19.01.94	Freiburg
5	Thilo **KEHRER**	(26) 21.09.96	West Ham Utd (Eng)
15	Niklas **SULE**	(27) 03.09.95	Borussia Dortmund
16	Lukas **KLOSTERMANN**	(26) 03.06.96	RB Leipzig
20	Christian **GUNTER**	(29) 28.02.93	Freiburg
23	Nico **SCHLOTTERBECK**	(22) 01.12.99	Borussia Dortmund
25	Armel **BELLA-KOTCHAP**	(20) 11.12.01	Southampton (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Joshua **KIMMICH**	(27) 08.02.95	Bayern Munich
8	Leon **GORETZKA**	(27) 06.02.95	Bayern Munich
11	Mario **GOTZE**	(30) 03.06.92	Eintract Frankfurt
14	Jamal **MUSIALA**	(19) 26.02.03	Bayern Munich
17	Julian **BRANDT**	(26) 02.05.96	Borussia Dortmund
18	Jonas **HOFMANN**	(30) 14.07.92	B. M'gladbach (Ger)
21	Ilkay **GUNDOGAN**	(32) 24.10.90	Manchester City (Eng)

FORWARDS

7	Kai **HAVERTZ**	(23) 11.06.99	Chelsea (Eng)
9	Niclas **FULLKRUG**	(29) 09.02.93	Werder Bremen
10	Serge **GNABRY**	(27) 14.07.95	Bayern Munich
13	Thomas **MULLER**	(33) 13.09.89	Bayern Munich
19	Leroy **SANE**	(26) 11.01.96	Bayern Munich
24	Karim **ADEYEMI**	(20) 18.01.02	Borussia Dortmund
26	Youssoufa **MOUKOKO**	(18) 20.11.04	Borussia Dortmund

COACH

Hansi **FLICK**	(57) 24.02.65

GHANA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lawrence **ATI-ZIGI**	(25) 29.11.96	St Gallen (Sui)
12	Ibrahim **DANLAD**	(19) 02.12.02	Asante Kotoko
16	Abdul Manaf **NURUDEEN**	(23) 08.02.99	Eupen (Bel)

DEFENDERS

2	Tariq **LAMPTEY**	(22) 30.09.00	Brighton (Eng)
3	Denis **ODOI**	(34) 27.05.88	Club Brugge (Bel)
4	Mohammed **SALISU**	(23) 17.04.99	Southampton (Eng)
14	Gideon **MENSAH**	(24) 18.07.98	Auxerre (Fra)
15	Joseph **AIDOO**	(27) 29.09.95	Celta Vigo (Spa)
17	Abdul **BABA RAHMAN**	(28) 02.07.94	Reading (Eng)
18	Daniel **AMARTEY**	(27) 21.12.94	Leicester City (Eng)
23	Alexander **DJIKU**	(28) 09.08.94	Strasbourg (Fra)
26	Alidu **SEIDU**	(22) 04.06.00	Clermont (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Thomas **PARTEY**	(29) 13.06.93	Arsenal (Eng)
6	Elisha **OWUSU**	(25) 07.11.97	Gent (Bel)
8	Daniel-Kofi **KYEREH**	(26) 08.03.96	Freiburg (Ger)
20	Mohammed **KUDUS**	(22) 02.08.00	Ajax (Ned)
21	Salis **ABDUL-SAMED**	(22) 26.03.00	Lens (Fra)

FORWARDS

7	Abdul **FATAWU ISSAHAKU**	(18) 08.03.04	Sporting (Por)
9	Jordan **AYEW**	(31) 11.09.91	Crystal Palace (Eng)
10	Andre **AYEW**	(32) 17.12.89	Al Sadd (Qat)
11	Osman **BUKARI**	(23) 13.12.98	Red Star Belgrade (Srb)
13	Daniel **AFRIYIE-BARNIEH**	(21) 26.06.01	Hearts of Oak
19	Inaki **WILLIAMS**	(28) 15.06.94	Athletic Bilbao (Spa)
22	**KAMALDEEN** Sulemana	(20) 15.02.02	Rennes (Fra)
24	Kamal **SOWAH**	(22) 09.01.00	Club Brugge (Bel)
25	Antoine **SEMENYO**	(22) 07.01.00	Bristol City (Eng)

COACH

Otto **ADDO**	(47) 09.06.75

IRAN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alireza **BEYRANVAND**	(30) 21.09.92	Persepolis
12	Payam **NIAZMAND**	(27) 06.04.95	Sepahan
22	Amir **ABEDZADEH**	(29) 26.04.93	Ponferradina (Spa)
24	Hossein **HOSSEINI**	(30) 30.06.92	Esteghlal

DEFENDERS

2	Sadegh **MOHARRAMI**	(26) 01.03.96	Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
4	Shojae **KHALILZADEH**	(33) 14.05.89	Al Ahli (Qat)
5	Milad **MOHAMMADI**	(29) 29.09.93	AEK Athens (Gre)
8	Morteza **POURALIGANJI**	(30) 19.04.92	Persepolis
13	Hossein **KANAANIZADEGAN**	(28) 23.03.94	Al Ahli (Qat)
15	Rouzbeh **CHESHMI**	(29) 24.07.93	Esteghlal
19	Majid **HOSSEINI**	(26) 20.06.96	Kayserispor (Tur)
23	Ramin **REZAEIAN**	(32) 21.03.90	Sepahan
25	Abolfazl **JALALI**	(24) 26.06.98	Esteghlal

MIDFIELDERS

3	Ehsan **HAJISAFI**	(32) 25.02.90	AEK Athens (Gre)
6	Saeid **EZATOLAHI**	(26) 01.10.96	Vejle (Den)
11	Vahid **AMIRI**	(34) 02.04.88	Persepolis
14	Saman **GHODDOS**	(29) 06.09.93	Brentford (Eng)
16	Mehdi **TORABI**	(28) 10.09.94	Persepolis
17	Ali **GHOLIZADEH**	(26) 10.03.96	Charleroi (Bel)
18	Ali **KARIMI**	(28) 11.02.94	Kayserispor (Tur)
21	Ahmad **NOOROLLAHI**	(29) 01.02.93	Shabab Al Ahli (UAE)

FORWARDS

7	Alireza **JAHANBAKHSH**	(29) 11.08.93	Feyenoord (Ned)
9	Mehdi **TAREMI**	(30) 18.07.92	Porto (Por)
10	Karim **ANSARIFARD**	(32) 03.04.90	Omonia (Cyp)
20	Sardar **AZMOUN**	(27) 01.01.95	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)

COACH

Carlos **QUEIROZ** (Por)	(69) 01.03.53

JAPAN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Eiji **KAWASHIMA**	(39) 20.03.83	Strasbourg (Fra)
12	Shuichi **GONDA**	(33) 03.03.89	Shimizu S-Pulse
23	Daniel **SCHMIDT**	(30) 03.02.92	Sint-Truiden (Bel)

DEFENDERS

2	Miki **YAMANE**	(28) 22.12.93	Kawasaki Frontale
3	Shogo **TANIGUCHI**	(31) 15.07.91	Kawasaki Frontale
4	Ko **ITAKURA**	(25) 27.01.97	B. M'gladbach (Ger)
5	Yuto **NAGATOMO**	(36) 12.09.86	FC Tokyo
16	Takehiro **TOMIYASU**	(24) 05.11.98	Arsenal (Eng)
19	Hiroki **SAKAI**	(32) 12.04.90	Urawa Red Diamonds
22	Maya **YOSHIDA**	(34) 24.08.88	Schalke (Ger)
26	Hiroki **ITO**	(23) 12.05.99	Stuttgart (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Wataru **ENDO**	(29) 09.02.93	Stuttgart (Ger)
7	Gaku **SHIBASAKI**	(30) 28.05.92	Leganes (Spa)
10	Takumi **MINAMINO**	(27) 16.01.95	Monaco (Fra)
11	Takefusa **KUBO**	(21) 04.06.01	Real Sociedad (Spa)
13	Hidemasa **MORITA**	(27) 10.05.95	Sporting (Por)
15	Daichi **KAMADA**	(26) 05.08.96	Eintract Frankfurt (Ger)
17	Ao **TANAKA**	(24) 10.09.98	Fortuna Dusseldorf (Ger)
24	Yuki **SOMA**	(25) 25.02.97	Nagoya Grampus

FORWARDS

8	Ritsu **DOAN**	(24) 16.06.98	Freiburg (Ger)
9	Kaoru **MITOMA**	(25) 20.05.97	Brighton (Eng)
14	Junya **ITO**	(29) 09.03.93	Reims (Fra)
18	Takuma **ASANO**	(28) 10.11.94	Bochum (Ger)
20	Shuto **MACHINO**	(23) 30.09.99	Shonan Bellmare
21	Ayase **UEDA**	(24) 28.08.98	Cercle Brugge (Bel)
25	Daizen **MAEDA**	(25) 20.10.97	Celtic (Sco)

COACH

Hajime **MORIYASU**	(54) 23.08.68

(Clubs and ages as of 20.11.22)

WORLD CUP 2022

MEXICO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alfredo **TALAVERA**	(40) 18.09.82	Juarez
12	Rodolfo **COTA**	(35) 03.07.87	Leon
13	Guillermo **OCHOA**	(37) 13.07.85	America

DEFENDERS

2	Nestor **ARAUJO**	(31) 29.08.91	America
3	Cesar **MONTES**	(25) 24.02.97	Monterrey
5	Johan **VASQUEZ**	(24) 22.10.98	Cremonese (Ita)
6	Gerardo **ARTEAGA**	(24) 07.09.98	Genk (Bel)
15	Hector **MORENO**	(34) 17.01.88	Monterrey
19	Jorge **SANCHEZ**	(24) 10.12.97	Ajax (Ned)
23	Jesus **GALLARDO**	(28) 15.08.94	Monterrey
26	Kevin **ALVAREZ**	(23) 15.01.99	Pachuca

MIDFIELDERS

4	Edson **ALVAREZ**	(25) 24.10.97	Ajax (Ned)
7	Luis **ROMO**	(27) 05.06.95	Monterrey
8	Carlos **RODRIGUEZ**	(25) 03.01.97	Cruz Azul
14	Erick **GUTIERREZ**	(27) 15.06.95	PSV (Ned)
16	Hector **HERRERA**	(32) 19.04.90	Houston Dynamo (USA)
18	Andres **GUARDADO**	(36) 28.09.86	Real Betis (Spa)
24	Luis **CHAVEZ**	(26) 15.01.96	Pachuca

FORWARDS

9	Raul **JIMENEZ**	(31) 05.05.91	Wolves (Eng)
10	Alexis **VEGA**	(24) 25.11.97	Guadalajara
11	Rogelio **FUNES MORI**	(31) 05.03.91	Monterrey
17	Orbelin **PINEDA**	(26) 24.03.96	AEK Athens (Gre)
20	Henry **MARTIN**	(30) 18.11.92	America
21	Uriel **ANTUNA**	(25) 21.08.97	Cruz Azul
22	Hirving **LOZANO**	(27) 30.07.95	Napoli (Ita)
25	Roberto **ALVARADO**	(24) 07.09.98	Guadalajara

COACH

Tata **MARTINO** (Arg) (60) 20.11.62

MOROCCO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Yassine **BOUNOU**	(31) 05.04.91	Sevilla (Spa)
12	**MUNIR** Mohamedi El Kajoui	(33) 10.05.89	Al Wehda (KSA)
22	Ahmed Reda **TAGNAOUTI**	(26) 05.04.96	Wydad AC

DEFENDERS

2	Achraf **HAKIMI**	(24) 04.11.98	PSG (Fra)
3	Noussair **MAZRAOUI**	(25) 14.11.97	Bayern Munich (Ger)
5	Nayef **AGUERD**	(26) 30.03.96	West Ham Utd (Eng)
6	Romain **SAISS**	(32) 26.03.90	Besiktas (Tur)
18	Jawad **EL YAMIQ**	(30) 29.02.92	Real Valladolid (Spa)
20	Achraf **DARI**	(23) 06.05.99	Brest (Fra)
24	Badr **BENOUN**	(29) 30.09.93	Qatar SC (Qat)
25	Yahia **ATTIAT ALLAH**	(27) 02.03.95	Wydad AC

MIDFIELDERS

4	Sofyan **AMRABAT**	(26) 21.08.96	Fiorentina (Ita)
8	Azzedine **OUNAHI**	(22) 19.04.00	Angers (Fra)
11	Abdelhamid **SABIRI**	(25) 28.11.96	Sampdoria (Ita)
15	Selim **AMALLAH**	(26) 15.11.96	Standard Liege (Bel)
23	Bilal **EL KHANNOUSS**	(18) 10.05.04	Genk (Bel)
26	Yahya **JABRANE**	(31) 18.06.91	Wydad AC

FORWARDS

7	Hakim **ZIYECH**	(29) 19.03.93	Chelsea (Eng)
9	Abderrazak **HAMDALLAH**	(31) 17.12.90	Al Ittihad (KSA)
10	Anass **ZAROURY**	(22) 07.11.00	Burnley (Eng)
13	Ilias **CHAIR**	(25) 30.10.97	QPR (Eng)
14	Zakaria **ABOUKHLAL**	(22) 18.02.00	Toulouse (Fra)
16	Abde **EZZALZOULI**	(20) 17.12.01	Osasuna (Spa)
17	Sofiane **BOUFAL**	(29) 17.09.93	Angers (Fra)
19	Youssef **EN-NESYRI**	(25) 01.06.97	Sevilla (Spa)
21	Walid **CHEDDIRA**	(24) 22.01.98	Bari (Ita)

COACH

Walid **REGRAGUI** (47) 23.09.75

NETHERLANDS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Remko **PASVEER**	(39) 08.11.83	Ajax
13	Justin **BIJLOW**	(24) 22.01.98	Feyenoord
23	Andries **NOPPERT**	(28) 07.04.94	Heerenveen

DEFENDERS

2	Jurrien **TIMBER**	(21) 17.06.01	Ajax
3	Matthijs **DE LIGT**	(23) 12.08.99	Bayern Munich (Ger)
4	Virgil **VAN DIJK**	(31) 08.07.91	Liverpool (Eng)
5	Nathan **AKE**	(27) 18.02.95	Manchester City (Eng)
6	Stefan **DE VRIJ**	(30) 05.02.92	Internazionale (Ita)
16	Tyrell **MALACIA**	(23) 17.08.99	Manchester Utd (Eng)
17	Daley **BLIND**	(32) 09.03.90	Ajax
22	Denzel **DUMFRIES**	(26) 18.04.96	Internazionale (Ita)
26	Jeremie **FRIMPONG**	(21) 10.12.00	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

11	Steven **BERGHUIS**	(30) 19.12.91	Ajax
14	Davy **KLAASSEN**	(29) 21.02.93	Ajax
15	Marten **DE ROON**	(31) 29.03.91	Atalanta (Ita)
20	Teun **KOOPMEINERS**	(24) 28.02.98	Atalanta (Ita)
21	Frenkie **DE JONG**	(25) 12.05.97	Barcelona (Spa)
24	Kenneth **TAYLOR**	(20) 16.05.02	Ajax
25	Xavi **SIMONS**	(19) 21.04.03	PSV

FORWARDS

7	Steven **BERGWIJN**	(25) 08.10.97	Ajax
8	Cody **GAKPO**	(23) 07.05.99	PSV
9	Luuk **DE JONG**	(32) 27.08.90	PSV
10	Memphis **DEPAY**	(28) 13.02.94	Barcelona (Spa)
12	Noa **LANG**	(23) 17.06.99	Club Brugge (Bel)
18	Vincent **JANSSEN**	(28) 15.06.94	Antwerp (Bel)
19	Wout **WEGHORST**	(30) 07.08.92	Besiktas (Tur)

COACH

Louis **VAN GAAL** (71) 08.08.51

POLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Wojciech **SZCZESNY**	(32) 18.04.90	Juventus (Ita)
12	Lukasz **SKORUPSKI**	(31) 05.05.91	Bologna (Ita)
22	Kamil **GRABARA**	(23) 08.01.99	Copenhagen (Den)

DEFENDERS

2	Matty **CASH**	(25) 07.08.97	Aston Villa (Eng)
3	Artur **JEDRZEJCZYK**	(35) 04.11.87	Legia Warsaw
4	Mateusz **WIETESKA**	(25) 11.02.97	Clermont (Fra)
5	Jan **BEDNAREK**	(26) 12.04.96	Aston Villa (Eng)
14	Jakub **KIWIOR**	(22) 15.02.00	Spezia (Ita)
15	Kamil **GLIK**	(34) 03.02.88	Benevento (Ita)
18	Bartosz **BERESZYNSKI**	(30) 12.07.92	Sampdoria (Ita)
25	Robert **GUMNY**	(24) 04.06.98	Augsburg (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Krystian **BIELIK**	(24) 04.01.98	Birmingham City (Eng)
8	Damian **SZYMANSKI**	(27) 16.06.95	AEK Athens (Gre)
10	Grzegorz **KRYCHOWIAK**	(32) 29.01.90	Al Shabab (KSA)
11	Kamil **GROSICKI**	(34) 08.06.88	Pogon Szczecin
13	Jakub **KAMINSKI**	(20) 05.06.02	Wolfsburg (Ger)
17	Szymon **ZURKOWSKI**	(25) 25.09.97	Fiorentina (Ita)
19	Sebastian **SZYMANSKI**	(23) 10.05.99	Feyenoord (Ned)
20	Piotr **ZIELINSKI**	(28) 20.05.94	Napoli (Ita)
21	Nicola **ZALEWSKI**	(20) 23.01.02	Roma (Ita)
24	Przemyslaw **FRANKOWSKI**	(27) 12.04.95	Lens (Fra)
26	Michal **SKORAS**	(22) 15.02.00	Lech Poznan

FORWARDS

7	Arkadiusz **MILIK**	(28) 28.02.94	Juventus (Ita)
9	Robert **LEWANDOWSKI**	(34) 21.08.88	Barcelona (Spa)
16	Karol **SWIDERSKI**	(25) 23.01.97	Charlotte FC (USA)
23	Krzysztof **PIATEK**	(27) 01.07.95	Salernitana (Ita)

COACH

Czeslaw **MICHNIEWICZ** (52) 12.02.1970

PORTUGAL

GOALKEEPERS

1	Rui **PATRICIO**	(34) 15.02.88	Roma (Ita)
12	Jose **SA**	(29) 17.01.93	Wolves (Eng)
22	Diogo **COSTA**	(23) 19.09.99	Porto

DEFENDERS

2	Diogo **DALOT**	(23) 18.03.99	Manchester Utd (Eng)
3	**PEPE**	(39) 26.02.83	Porto
4	Ruben **DIAS**	(25) 14.05.97	Manchester City (Eng)
5	Raphael **GUERREIRO**	(28) 22.12.93	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
13	**DANILO** Pereira	(31) 09.09.91	PSG (Fra)
19	Nuno **MENDES**	(20) 19.06.02	PSG (Fra)
20	Joao **CANCELO**	(28) 27.05.94	Manchester City (Eng)
24	**ANTONIO SILVA**	(19) 30.10.03	Benfica

MIDFIELDERS

6	Joao **PALHINHA**	(27) 09.07.95	Fulham (Eng)
8	Bruno **FERNANDES**	(28) 08.09.94	Manchester Utd (Eng)
10	**BERNARDO SILVA**	(28) 10.08.94	Manchester City (Eng)
14	**WILLIAM** Carvalho	(30) 07.04.92	Real Betis (Spa)
16	**VITINHA**	(22) 13.02.00	PSG (Fra)
17	Joao **MARIO**	(29) 19.01.93	Benfica
18	Ruben **NEVES**	(25) 13.03.97	Wolves (Eng)
23	**MATHEUS NUNES**	(24) 27.08.98	Wolves (Eng)
25	**OTAVIO**	(27) 09.02.95	Porto

FORWARDS

7	Cristiano **RONALDO**	(37) 05.02.85	Manchester Utd (Eng)
9	**ANDRE SILVA**	(27) 06.11.95	RB Leipzig (Ger)
11	**JOAO FELIX**	(23) 10.11.99	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
15	Rafael **LEAO**	(23) 10.06.99	Milan (Ita)
21	Ricardo **HORTA**	(28) 15.09.94	Braga
26	Goncalo **RAMOS**	(21) 20.06.01	Benfica

COACH

Fernando **SANTOS** (68) 10.10.54

QATAR

GOALKEEPERS

1	Saad **AL SHEEB**	(32) 19.02.90	Al Sadd
21	Yousef **HASSAN**	(26) 24.05.96	Al Gharafa
22	Meshaal **BARSHAM**	(24) 14.02.98	Al Sadd

DEFENDERS

2	**PEDRO MIGUEL**	(32) 06.08.90	Al Sadd
3	Abdelkarim **HASSAN**	(29) 28.08.93	Al Sadd
4	Mohammed **WAAD**	(23) 18.09.99	Al Sadd
5	Tarek **SALMAN**	(24) 05.12.97	Al Sadd
13	Musaab **KHEDER**	(29) 01.01.93	Al Sadd
14	**HOMAM** Ahmed	(23) 25.08.99	Al Gharafa
15	Bassam **AL RAWI**	(24) 16.12.97	Al Duhail
16	Boualem **KHOUKHI**	(32) 09.07.90	Al Sadd
17	Ismail **MOHAMMAD**	(32) 05.04.90	Al Duhail
25	Jassem **GABER**	(20) 20.02.02	Al Arabi

MIDFIELDERS

6	Abdulaziz **HATEM**	(32) 01.01.90	Al Rayyan
8	Ali **ASAD**	(29) 19.01.93	Al Sadd
12	Karim **BOUDIAF**	(32) 16.09.90	Al Duhail
20	Salem **AL HAJRI**	(26) 10.04.96	Al Sadd
23	Assim **MADIBO**	(26) 22.10.96	Al Duhail
24	Naif **AL HADHRAMI**	(21) 18.07.01	Al Rayyan
26	Mostafa **MESHAAL**	(21) 28.03.01	Al Sadd

FORWARDS

7	Ahmed **ALAAELDIN**	(29) 31.01.93	Al Gharafa
9	Mohammed **MUNTARI**	(28) 20.12.93	Al Duhail
10	Hassan **AL HAYDOS**	(31) 11.12.90	Al Sadd
11	Akram **AFIF**	(26) 18.11.96	Al Sadd
18	Khalid **MUNEER**	(24) 24.02.98	Al Wakrah
19	**ALMOEZ** Ali	(26) 19.08.96	Al Duhail

COACH

Felix **SANCHEZ** (Spa) (46) 13.12.75

SAUDI ARABIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mohammed **AL RUBAIE**	(25) 14.08.97	Al Ahli
21	Mohammed **AL OWAIS**	(31) 10.10.91	Al Hilal
22	Nawaf **AL AQIDI**	(22) 10.05.00	Al Nassr

DEFENDERS

2	Sultan **AL GHANNAM**	(28) 06.05.94	Al Nassr
3	Abdullah **MADU**	(29) 15.07.93	Al Nassr
4	Abdulelah **AL AMRI**	(25) 15.01.97	Al Nassr
5	Ali **AL BULAYHI**	(32) 21.11.89	Al Hilal
6	Mohammed **AL BURAYK**	(30) 15.09.92	Al Hilal
12	Saud **ABDULHAMID**	(23) 18.07.99	Al Hilal
13	Yasser **AL SHAHRANI**	(30) 25.05.92	Al Hilal
17	Hassan **AL TAMBAKTI**	(23) 09.02.99	Al Shabab

MIDFIELDERS

7	Salman **AL FARAJ**	(33) 01.08.89	Al Hilal
8	Abdulellah **AL MALKI**	(28) 11.10.94	Al Hilal
14	Abdullah **OTAYF**	(30) 03.08.92	Al Hilal
15	Ali **AL HASSAN**	(25) 04.03.97	Al Nassr
16	Sami **AL NAJEI**	(25) 07.02.97	Al Nassr
18	Nawaf **AL ABED**	(32) 26.01.90	Al Shabab
23	Mohamed **KANNO**	(28) 22.09.94	Al Hilal
24	Nasser **AL DAWSARI**	(23) 19.12.98	Al Hilal
26	Riyadh **SHARAHILI**	(29) 28.04.93	Abha

FORWARDS

9	Firas **AL BURAIKAN**	(22) 14.05.00	Al Fateh
10	Salem **AL DAWSARI**	(31) 19.08.91	Al Hilal
11	Saleh **AL SHEHRI**	(29) 01.11.93	Al Hilal
19	Hattan **BAHEBRI**	(30) 16.07.92	Al Shabab
20	Abdulrahman **AL OBUD**	(27) 01.06.95	Al Ittihad
25	Haitham **ASIRI**	(21) 25.03.01	Al Ahli

COACH

Herve **RENARD** (Fra) (54) 30.09.68

SENEGAL

GOALKEEPERS

1	Seny **DIENG**	(27) 23.11.94	QPR (Eng)
16	Edouard **MENDY**	(30) 01.03.92	Chelsea (Eng)
23	Alfred **GOMIS**	(29) 05.09.93	Rennes (Fra)

DEFENDERS

2	Formose **MENDY**	(21) 02.01.01	Amiens (Fra)
3	Kalidou **KOULIBALY**	(31) 20.06.91	Chelsea (Eng)
4	Pape Abou **CISSE**	(27) 14.09.95	Olympiakos (Gre)
10	Moussa **NDIAYE**	(20) 18.06.02	Anderlecht (Bel)
12	Fode **BALLO-TOURE**	(25) 03.01.97	Milan (Ita)
14	Ismail **JAKOBS**	(23) 17.08.99	Monaco (Fra)
21	Youssouf **SABALY**	(29) 05.03.93	Real Betis (Spa)
22	Abdou **DIALLO**	(26) 04.05.96	RB Leipzig (Ger)
24	Moustapha **NAME**	(27) 05.05.95	Pafos (Cyp)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Idrissa Gana **GUEYE**	(33) 26.09.89	Everton (Eng)
6	Nampalys **MENDY**	(30) 23.06.92	Leicester City (Eng)
8	Cheikhou **KOUYATE**	(32) 21.12.89	Nott'm Forest (Eng)
11	Pathe **CISS**	(28) 16.03.94	Rayo Vallecano (Spa)
15	Krepin **DIATTA**	(23) 25.02.99	Monaco (Fra)
17	Pape Matar **SARR**	(20) 14.09.02	Tottenham (Eng)
25	Mamadou **LOUM**	(25) 30.12.96	Reading (Eng)
26	Pape **GUEYE**	(23) 24.01.99	Marseille (Fra)

FORWARDS

7	Nicolas **JACKSON**	(21) 20.06.01	Villarreal (Spa)
9	Boulaye **DIA**	(26) 16.11.96	Salernitana (Ita)
13	Iliman **NDIAYE**	(22) 06.03.00	Sheffield Utd (Eng)
18	Ismaila **SARR**	(24) 25.02.98	Watford (Eng)
19	Famara **DIEDHIOU**	(29) 15.12.92	Alanyaspor (Tur)
20	Bamba **DIENG**	(22) 23.03.00	Marseille (Fra)

COACH

Aliou **CISSE** (46) 24.03.76

SERBIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marko **DMITROVIC**	(30) 24.01.92	Sevilla (Spa)
12	Predrag **RAJKOVIC**	(27) 31.10.95	Mallorca (Spa)
23	Vanja **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC**	(25) 20.02.97	Torino (Ita)

DEFENDERS

2	Strahinja **PAVLOVIC**	(21) 24.05.01	RB Salzburg (Aut)
3	Strahinja **ERAKOVIC**	(21) 22.01.01	Red Star Belgrade
4	Nikola **MILENKOVIC**	(25) 12.10.97	Fiorentina (Ita)
5	Milos **VELJKOVIC**	(27) 26.09.95	Werder Bremen (Ger)
13	Stefan **MITROVIC**	(32) 22.05.90	Getafe (Spa)
15	Srdjan **BABIC**	(26) 22.04.96	Almeria (Spa)
25	Filip **MLADENOVIC**	(31) 15.08.91	Legia Warsaw (Pol)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Nemanja **MAKSIMOVIC**	(27) 26.01.95	Getafe (Spa)
7	Nemanja **RADONJIC**	(26) 15.02.96	Torino (Ita)
8	Nemanja **GUDELJ**	(31) 16.11.91	Sevilla (Spa)
10	Dusan **TADIC**	(34) 20.11.88	Ajax (Ned)
14	Andrija **ZIVKOVIC**	(26) 11.07.96	PAOK (Gre)
16	Sasa **LUKIC**	(26) 13.08.96	Torino (Ita)
17	Filip **KOSTIC**	(30) 01.11.92	Juventus (Ita)
19	Uros **RACIC**	(24) 17.03.98	Braga (Por)
20	Sergej **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC**	(27) 27.02.95	Lazio (Ita)
21	Filip **DJURICIC**	(30) 30.01.92	Sampdoria (Ita)
22	Darko **LAZOVIC**	(32) 15.09.90	Hellas Verona (Ita)
24	Ivan **ILIC**	(21) 17.03.01	Hellas Verona (Ita)
26	Marko **GRUJIC**	(26) 13.04.96	Porto (Por)

FORWARDS

9	Aleksandar **MITROVIC**	(28) 16.09.94	Fulham (Eng)
11	Luka **JOVIC**	(24) 23.12.97	Fiorentina (Ita)
18	Dusan **VLAHOVIC**	(22) 28.01.00	Juventus (Ita)

COACH

Dragan **STOJKOVIC**	(57) 03.03.65

SOUTH KOREA

GOALKEEPERS

1	**KIM** Seung-gyu	(32) 30.09.90	Al Shabab (KSA)
12	**SONG** Bum-keun	(25) 15.10.97	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
21	**JO** Hyeon-woo	(31) 25.09.91	Ulsan Hyundai

DEFENDERS

2	**YOON** Jong-gyu	(24) 20.03.98	FC Seoul
3	**KIM** Jin-su	(30) 13.06.92	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
4	**KIM** Min-jae	(26) 15.11.96	Napoli (Ita)
14	**HONG** Chul	(32) 17.09.90	Daegu FC
15	**KIM** Moon-hwan	(27) 01.08.95	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
19	**KIM** Young-gwon	(32) 27.02.90	Ulsan Hyundai
20	**KWON** Kyung-won	(30) 31.01.92	Gamba Osaka (Jpn)
23	**KIM** Tae-hwan	(33) 24.07.89	Ulsan Hyundai
24	**CHO** Yu-min	(26) 17.11.96	Daejeon Hana Citizen

MIDFIELDERS

5	**JUNG** Woo-young	(32) 14.12.89	Al Sadd (Qat)
6	**HWANG** In-beom	(26) 20.09.96	Olympiakos (Gre)
8	**PAIK** Seung-ho	(25) 17.03.97	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
10	**LEE** Jae-sung	(30) 10.08.92	Mainz (Ger)
13	**SON** Jun-ho	(30) 12.05.92	Shandong Taishan (Chn)
17	**NA** Sang-ho	(26) 12.08.96	FC Seoul
18	**LEE** Kang-in	(21) 19.02.01	Mallorca (Spa)
22	**KWON** Chang-hoon	(28) 30.06.94	Gimcheon Sangmu
25	**JEONG** Woo-yeong	(23) 20.09.99	Freiburg (Ger)

FORWARDS

7	**SON** Heung-min	(30) 08.07.92	Tottenham (Eng)
9	**CHO** Gue-sung	(24) 25.01.98	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
11	**HWANG** Hee-chan	(26) 26.01.96	Wolves (Eng)
16	**HWANG** Ui-jo	(30) 28.08.92	Olympiakos (Gre)
26	**SONG** Min-kyu	(23) 12.09.99	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors

COACH

Paulo **BENTO** (Por)	(53) 20.06.69

SPAIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Robert **SANCHEZ**	(25) 18.11.97	Brighton (Eng)
13	David **RAYA**	(27) 15.09.95	Brentford (Eng)
23	Unai **SIMON**	(25) 11.06.97	Athletic Bilbao

DEFENDERS

2	Cesar **AZPILICUETA**	(33) 28.08.89	Chelsea (Eng)
3	Eric **GARCIA**	(21) 09.01.01	Barcelona
4	Pau **TORRES**	(25) 16.01.97	Villarreal
14	Alejandro **BALDE**	(19) 18.10.03	Barcelona
15	**HUGO** Guillamon	(22) 31.01.00	Valencia
18	Jordi **ALBA**	(33) 21.03.89	Barcelona
20	Dani **CARVAJAL**	(30) 11.01.92	Real Madrid
24	Aymeric **LAPORTE**	(28) 27.05.94	Manchester City (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Sergio **BUSQUETS**	(34) 16.07.88	Barcelona
6	Marcos **LLORENTE**	(27) 30.01.95	Atletico Madrid
8	**KOKE**	(30) 08.01.92	Atletico Madrid
9	**GAVI**	(18) 05.08.04	Barcelona
16	**RODRI**	(26) 22.06.96	Manchester City (Eng)
19	Carlos **SOLER**	(25) 02.01.97	PSG (Fra)
26	**PEDRI**	(19) 25.11.02	Barcelona

FORWARDS

7	Alvaro **MORATA**	(30) 23.10.92	Atletico Madrid
10	Marco **ASENSIO**	(26) 21.01.96	Real Madrid
11	Ferran **TORRES**	(22) 29.02.00	Barcelona
12	Nico **WILLIAMS**	(20) 12.07.02	Athletic Bilbao
17	**YEREMY**	(20) 20.10.02	Villarreal
21	Dani **OLMO**	(24) 07.05.98	RB Leipzig (Ger)
22	Pablo **SARABIA**	(30) 11.05.92	PSG (Fra)
25	Ansu **FATI**	(20) 31.10.02	Barcelona

COACH

Luis **ENRIQUE**	(52) 08.05.70

SWITZERLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Yann **SOMMER**	(33) 17.12.88	B. M'gladbach (Ger)
12	Jonas **OMLIN**	(28) 10.01.94	Montpellier (Fra)
21	Gregor **KOBEL**	(24) 06.12.97	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
24	Philipp **KOHN**	(24) 02.04.98	RB Salzburg (Aut)

DEFENDERS

3	Silvan **WIDMER**	(29) 05.03.93	Mainz (Ger)
4	Nico **ELVEDI**	(26) 30.09.96	B. M'gladbach (Ger)
5	Manuel **AKANJI**	(27) 19.07.95	Manchester City (Eng)
13	Ricardo **RODRIGUEZ**	(30) 25.08.92	Torino (Ita)
18	Eray **COMERT**	(24) 04.02.98	Valencia (Spa)
22	Fabian **SCHAR**	(30) 20.12.91	Newcastle Utd (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Edimilson **FERNANDES**	(26) 15.04.96	Mainz (Ger)
6	Denis **ZAKARIA**	(26) 20.11.96	Chelsea (Eng)
8	Remo **FREULER**	(30) 15.04.92	Nott'm Forest (Eng)
10	Granit **XHAKA**	(30) 27.09.92	Arsenal (Eng)
11	Renato **STEFFEN**	(31) 03.11.91	Lugano
14	Michel **AEBISCHER**	(25) 06.01.97	Bologna (Ita)
15	Djibril **SOW**	(25) 06.02.97	Eintract Frankfurt (Ger)
16	Christian **FASSNACHT**	(29) 11.11.93	Young Boys
20	Fabian **FREI**	(33) 08.01.89	Basel
23	Xherdan **SHAQIRI**	(31) 10.10.91	Chicago Fire (USA)
25	Fabian **RIEDER**	(20) 16.02.02	Young Boys
26	Ardon **JASHARI**	(20) 30.07.02	Luzern

FORWARDS

7	Breel **EMBOLO**	(25) 14.02.97	Monaco (Fra)
9	Haris **SEFEROVIC**	(30) 22.02.92	Galatasaray (Tur)
17	Ruben **VARGAS**	(24) 05.08.98	Augsburg (Ger)
19	Noah **OKAFOR**	(22) 24.05.00	RB Salzburg (Aut)

COACH

Murat **YAKIN**	(48) 15.09.74

TUNISIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Aymen **MATHLOUTHI**	(38) 14.09.84	Etoile du Sahel
16	Aymen **DAHMEN**	(25) 28.01.97	CS Sfaxien
22	Bechir **BEN SAID**	(29) 29.11.92	US Monastir
26	Mouez **HASSEN**	(27) 05.03.95	Club Africain

DEFENDERS

2	Bilel **IFA**	(32) 09.03.90	Kuwait SC (Kuw)
3	Montassar **TALBI**	(24) 26.05.98	Lorient (Fra)
4	Yassine **MERIAH**	(29) 02.07.93	Esperance
5	Nader **GHANDRI**	(27) 18.02.95	Club Africain
6	Dylan **BRONN**	(27) 19.06.95	Salernitana (Ita)
12	Ali **MAALOUL**	(32) 01.01.90	Al Ahly (Egy)
20	Mohamed **DRAGER**	(26) 25.06.96	Luzern (Sui)
21	Wajdi **KECHRIDA**	(27) 05.11.95	Atromitos (Gre)
24	Ali **ABDI**	(28) 20.12.93	Caen (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

8	Hannibal **MEJBRI**	(19) 21.01.03	Birmingham City (Eng)
13	Ferjani **SASSI**	(30) 18.03.92	Al Duhail (Qat)
14	Aissa **LAIDOUNI**	(25) 13.12.96	Ferencvaros (Hun)
15	Mohamed Ali **BEN ROMDHANE**	(23) 06.09.99	Esperance
17	Ellyes **SKHIRI**	(27) 10.05.95	Cologne (Ger)
18	Ghaylen **CHAALELI**	(28) 28.02.94	Esperance
25	Anis **BEN SLIMANE**	(21) 16.03.01	Brondby (Den)

FORWARDS

7	Youssef **MSAKNI**	(32) 28.10.90	Al Arabi (Qat)
9	Issam **JEBALI**	(30) 25.12.91	OB (Den)
10	Wahbi **KHAZRI**	(31) 08.02.91	Montpellier (Fra)
11	Taha Yassine **KHENISSI**	(30) 06.01.92	Kuwait SC (Kuw)
19	Seifeddine **JAZIRI**	(29) 12.02.93	Zamalek (Egy)
23	Naim **SLITI**	(30) 27.07.92	Al Ettifaq (KSA)

COACH

Jalel **KADRI**	(50) 14.12.71

UNITED STATES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Matt **TURNER**	(28) 24.06.94	Arsenal (Eng)
12	Ethan **HORVATH**	(27) 09.06.95	Luton Town (Eng)
25	Sean **JOHNSON**	(33) 31.05.89	New York City FC

DEFENDERS

2	Sergino **DEST**	(22) 03.11.00	Milan (Ita)
3	Walker **ZIMMERMAN**	(29) 19.05.93	Nashville SC
5	Antonee **ROBINSON**	(25) 08.08.97	Fulham (Eng)
13	Tim **REAM**	(35) 05.10.87	Fulham (Eng)
15	Aaron **LONG**	(30) 12.10.92	New York Red Bulls
18	Shaq **MOORE**	(26) 02.11.96	Nashville SC
20	Cameron **CARTER-VICKERS**	(24) 31.12.97	Celtic (Sco)
22	DeAndre **YEDLIN**	(29) 09.07.93	Inter Miami
26	Joe **SCALLY**	(19) 31.12.02	B. M'gladbach (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

4	Tyler **ADAMS**	(23) 14.02.99	Leeds Utd (Eng)
6	Yunus **MUSAH**	(19) 29.11.02	Valencia (Spa)
8	Weston **McKENNIE**	(24) 28.08.98	Juventus (Ita)
14	Luca **DE LA TORRE**	(24) 23.05.98	Celta Vigo (Spa)
17	Cristian **ROLDAN**	(27) 03.06.95	Seattle Sounders
23	Kellyn **ACOSTA**	(27) 24.07.95	LAFC

FORWARDS

7	Giovanni **REYNA**	(20) 13.11.02	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
9	Jesus **FERREIRA**	(21) 24.12.00	FC Dallas
10	Christian **PULISIC**	(24) 18.09.98	Chelsea (Eng)
11	Brenden **AARONSON**	(22) 22.10.00	Leeds Utd (Eng)
16	Jordan **MORRIS**	(28) 26.10.94	Seattle Sounders
19	Haji **WRIGHT**	(24) 27.03.98	Antalyaspor (Tur)
21	Timothy **WEAH**	(22) 22.02.00	Lille (Fra)
24	Josh **SARGENT**	(22) 20.02.00	Norwich City (Eng)

COACH

Gregg **BERHALTER**	(49) 01.08.73

URUGUAY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Fernando **MUSLERA**	(36) 16.06.86	Galatasaray (Tur)
12	Sebastian **SOSA**	(36) 19.08.86	Independiente (Arg)
23	Sergio **ROCHET**	(29) 23.03.93	Nacional

DEFENDERS

2	Jose Maria **GIMENEZ**	(27) 20.01.95	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
3	Diego **GODIN**	(36) 16.02.86	Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
4	Ronald **ARAUJO**	(23) 07.03.99	Barcelona (Spa)
13	Guillermo **VARELA**	(29) 24.03.93	Flamengo (Bra)
16	Mathias **OLIVERA**	(25) 31.10.97	Napoli (Ita)
17	Matias **VINA**	(25) 09.11.97	Roma (Ita)
19	Sebastian **COATES**	(32) 07.10.90	Sporting (Por)
22	Martin **CACERES**	(35) 07.04.87	LA Galaxy (USA)
26	Jose Luis **RODRIGUEZ**	(25) 14.03.97	Nacional

MIDFIELDERS

5	Matias **VECINO**	(31) 24.08.91	Lazio (Ita)
6	Rodrigo **BENTANCUR**	(25) 25.06.97	Tottenham (Eng)
7	Nicolas **DE LA CRUZ**	(25) 01.06.97	River Plate (Arg)
10	Giorgian **DE ARRASCAETA**	(28) 01.06.94	Flamengo (Bra)
14	Lucas **TORREIRA**	(26) 11.02.96	Galatasaray (Tur)
15	Federico **VALVERDE**	(24) 22.07.98	Real Madrid (Spa)
25	Manuel **UGARTE**	(21) 11.04.01	Sporting (Por)

FORWARDS

8	Facundo **PELLISTRI**	(20) 20.12.01	Manchester Utd (Eng)
9	Luis **SUAREZ**	(35) 24.01.87	Nacional
11	Darwin **NUNEZ**	(23) 24.06.99	Liverpool (Eng)
18	Maxi **GOMEZ**	(26) 14.08.96	Trabzonspor (Tur)
20	Facundo **TORRES**	(22) 13.04.00	Orlando City (USA)
21	Edinson **CAVANI**	(35) 14.02.87	Valencia (Spa)
24	Agustin **CANOBBIO**	(24) 01.10.98	Athletico Paranaense (Bra)

COACH

Diego **ALONSO**	(47) 16.04.75

WALES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Wayne **HENNESSEY**	(35) 24.01.87	Nott'm Forest (Eng)
12	Danny **WARD**	(29) 22.06.93	Leicester City (Eng)
21	Adam **DAVIES**	(30) 17.07.92	Sheffield Utd (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Chris **GUNTER**	(33) 21.07.89	AFC Wimbledon (Eng)
3	Neco **WILLIAMS**	(21) 13.04.01	Nott'm Forest (Eng)
4	Ben **DAVIES**	(29) 24.04.93	Tottenham (Eng)
5	Chris **MEPHAM**	(25) 05.11.97	Bournemouth (Eng)
6	Joe **RODON**	(25) 22.10.97	Rennes (Fra)
14	Connor **ROBERTS**	(27) 23.09.95	Burnley (Eng)
17	Tom **LOCKYER**	(27) 03.12.94	Luton Town (Eng)
24	Ben **CABANGO**	(22) 30.05.00	Swansea City

MIDFIELDERS

7	Joe **ALLEN**	(32) 14.03.90	Swansea City
8	Harry **WILSON**	(25) 22.03.97	Fulham (Eng)
10	Aaron **RAMSEY**	(31) 26.12.90	Nice (Fra)
15	Ethan **AMPADU**	(22) 14.09.00	Spezia (Ita)
16	Joe **MORRELL**	(25) 03.01.97	Portsmouth (Eng)
18	Jonny **WILLIAMS**	(29) 09.10.93	Swindon Town (Eng)
22	Sorba **THOMAS**	(23) 25.01.99	Huddersfield Town (Eng)
23	Dylan **LEVITT**	(22) 17.11.00	Dundee Utd (Sco)
25	Rubin **COLWILL**	(20) 27.04.02	Cardiff City
26	Matthew **SMITH**	(22) 22.11.99	MK Dons (Eng)

FORWARDS

9	Brennan **JOHNSON**	(21) 23.05.01	Nott'm Forest (Eng)
11	Gareth **BALE**	(33) 16.07.89	LAFC (USA)
13	Kieffer **MOORE**	(30) 08.08.92	Bournemouth (Eng)
19	Mark **HARRIS**	(23) 29.12.98	Cardiff City
20	Daniel **JAMES**	(25) 10.11.97	Fulham (Eng)

COACH

Rob **PAGE**	(48) 03.09.74

(Clubs and ages as of 20.11.22)

Club Football

Final tables 2022

All concluded domestic leagues

EUROPE

BELARUS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtyor Soligorsk (C)	30	20	5	5	55	17	65
Energetyk-BGU Minsk	30	18	6	6	50	27	60
BATE Borisov	30	16	11	3	51	21	59
Dinamo Minsk	30	16	11	3	50	25	59
Isloch Minsk Raion	30	16	6	8	51	33	54
Minsk	30	12	8	10	47	43	44
Gomel	30	12	7	11	36	37	43
Torpedo BelAZ Zhodino	30	11	10	9	35	32	43
Neman Grodno	30	9	13	8	39	36	40
Slavia Mozyr	30	10	7	13	42	46	37
Slutsk	30	7	11	12	26	41	32
Belshina Bobruisk	30	6	12	12	37	50	30
Dinamo Brest	30	5	12	13	29	43	27
Arsenal Dzerzhinsk* (R)	30	5	8	17	18	42	23
Vitebsk (R)	30	4	10	16	28	49	22
Dnepr Mogilev (R)	30	3	3	24	21	73	12

**Lost the relegation play-off*

ESTONIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flora (C)	36	31	4	1	94	21	97
FCI Levadia	36	24	7	5	74	25	79
Paide Linnameeskond	36	19	8	9	84	37	65
Nomme Kalju	36	19	8	9	59	30	65
Kuressaare	36	13	11	12	49	51	50
Tammeka	36	10	9	17	38	57	39
Narva Trans	36	10	8	18	43	58	38
Tallinna Kalev	36	10	5	21	42	92	35
Legion*	36	6	8	22	34	82	22
Vaprus (R)	36	3	2	31	32	96	11

**Deducted 4 points and won the relegation play-off*

FAROE ISLANDS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
KI (C)	27	25	2	0	78	7	77
Vikingur	27	18	4	5	69	24	58
HB	27	17	4	6	56	27	55
B36 Torshavn	27	11	5	11	48	29	38
EB/Streymur	27	10	5	12	31	54	35
B68 Toftir	27	9	3	15	37	50	30
07 Vestur	27	7	8	12	34	61	29
AB	27	8	5	14	33	63	29
NSI*	27	6	3	18	31	59	21
Skala (R)	27	1	7	19	25	68	10

**Enter the relegation play-off*

FINLAND

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HJK*	22	15	4	3	34	18	49
KuPS*	22	14	5	3	36	16	47
Honka*	22	12	5	5	45	21	41
Haka*	22	11	4	7	36	38	37
Inter Turku*	22	9	5	8	40	28	32
SJK*	22	9	4	9	29	32	31
Oulu**	22	8	6	8	35	35	30
Ilves**	22	6	7	9	31	36	25
Mariehamn**	22	6	6	10	25	33	24
VPS**	22	6	4	12	39	36	22
Lahti**	22	4	6	12	19	43	18
HIFK**	22	1	6	15	15	48	9

**Qualify for the championship round*
***Qualify for the relegation round*

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HJK (C)	27	18	4	5	41	23	58
KuPS	27	17	6	4	43	21	57
Honka	27	14	7	6	53	27	49
Haka	27	13	6	8	40	40	45
Inter Turku	27	10	5	12	42	36	35
SJK	27	10	5	12	33	38	35

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oulu	27	11	6	10	46	43	39
VPS	27	10	5	12	52	41	35
Ilves	27	9	7	11	43	43	34
Mariehamn	27	9	7	11	41	43	34
Lahti*	27	5	6	16	26	55	21
HIFK (R)	27	1	6	20	20	70	9

**Won the relegation play-off*

GEORGIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo Tbilisi (C)	36	24	8	4	73	29	80
Dinamo Batumi	36	23	8	5	87	34	77
Dila Gori	36	17	8	11	48	35	59
Samgurali	36	15	12	9	55	44	57
Torpedo Kutaisi	36	15	9	12	48	48	54
Saburtalo Tbilisi	36	13	8	15	51	49	47
Telavi	36	8	15	13	29	36	39
Sioni Bolnisi* (R)	36	8	12	16	38	60	36
Gagra*	36	9	9	18	36	57	36
Locomotive Tbilisi (R)	36	1	5	30	28	101	8

**S. Bolnisi lost relegation play-off, Gagra won theirs*

ICELAND

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Breidablik*	22	16	3	3	55	23	51
Vikingur Reykjavik*	22	12	7	3	58	32	43
KA*	22	13	4	5	45	26	43
Valur*	22	9	5	8	38	32	32
KR*	22	7	10	5	37	34	31
Stjarnan*	22	8	7	7	40	42	31
Keflavik**	22	8	4	10	39	40	28
Fram**	22	5	10	7	44	51	25
IBV**	22	4	8	10	33	44	20
Leiknir Reykjavik**	22	5	5	12	21	49	20
FH**	22	4	7	11	27	35	19
IA**	22	3	6	13	24	53	15

**Qualify for the championship round*
***Qualify for the relegation round*

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Breidablik (C)	27	20	3	4	66	27	63
KA	27	16	5	6	54	30	53
Vikingur Reykjavik	27	13	9	5	66	41	48
KR	27	9	11	7	42	40	38
Stjarnan	27	10	7	10	44	52	37
Valur	27	10	5	12	46	44	35

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Keflavik	27	11	4	12	56	48	37
IBV	27	8	8	11	43	50	32
Fram	27	7	10	10	53	63	31
FH	27	6	7	14	36	46	25
IA (R)	27	6	7	14	36	63	25
Leiknir Reykjavik (R)	27	5	6	16	28	66	21

KAZAKHSTAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Astana (C)	26	16	5	5	65	24	53
Aktobe	26	16	4	6	43	28	52
Tobol	26	14	5	7	46	33	47
Kairat	26	12	6	8	34	36	42
Ordabasy	26	11	5	10	36	39	38
Aksu	26	11	3	12	32	37	36
Shakhter Karagandy	26	9	5	12	34	35	32
Maqtaaral	26	8	7	11	28	38	31
Kaspiy	26	9	4	13	26	42	31
Kyzyl-Zhar	26	7	9	10	33	32	30
Atyrau	26	7	8	11	30	39	29
Taraz	26	6	10	10	27	29	28
Turan (R)	26	6	10	10	25	35	28
Akzhayik (R)	26	6	7	13	19	31	25

LATVIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valmiera (C)	36	26	7	3	101	25	85
Riga	36	26	3	7	68	23	81
RFS	36	22	10	4	83	32	76
Liepaja	36	21	7	8	72	42	70
Auda	36	15	6	15	42	36	51
Tukums	36	11	5	20	38	69	38
Daugavpils	36	9	7	20	30	67	34
Spartaks Jurmala	36	9	4	23	37	75	31
Metta*	36	5	7	24	41	86	22
Super Nova (R)	36	4	8	24	24	81	20

**Won the relegation play-off*

LITHUANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zalgiris (C)	36	26	6	4	85	27	84
Kauno Zalgiris	36	18	9	9	55	37	63
Panevezys	36	18	8	10	50	31	62
Hegelmann	36	16	13	7	62	32	61
Riteriai	36	17	8	11	53	41	59
Suduva	36	15	10	11	48	40	55
Siauliai	36	13	11	12	39	39	50
Banga	36	6	12	18	33	54	30
Dziugas (R)	36	5	12	19	34	67	27
Jonava (R)	36	0	3	33	12	103	3

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde (C)	30	25	3	2	71	25	78
Bodo/Glimt	30	18	6	6	86	41	60
Rosenborg	30	16	8	6	69	44	56
Lillestrom	30	16	5	9	49	34	53
Odd	30	13	6	11	43	45	45
Valerenga	30	13	5	12	52	49	44
Tromso	30	10	13	7	46	49	43
Sarpsborg 08	30	12	5	13	57	54	41
Aalesund	30	10	9	11	32	45	39
Haugesund	30	10	8	12	42	46	38
Viking	30	9	8	13	48	54	35
Stromsgodset	30	9	6	15	44	55	33
HamKam	30	6	13	11	33	43	31
Sandefjord*	30	6	6	18	42	68	24
Kristiansund (R)	30	5	8	17	37	60	23
Jerv (R)	30	5	5	20	30	69	20

**Won the relegation play-off*

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shamrock Rovers (C)	36	24	7	5	61	22	79
Derry City	36	18	12	6	53	27	66
Dundalk	36	18	12	6	53	30	66
St Patrick's Athletic	36	18	7	11	57	37	61
Sligo Rovers	36	13	10	13	47	44	49
Bohemians	36	12	10	14	45	46	46
Shelbourne	36	10	11	15	40	49	41
Drogheda United	36	9	11	16	34	58	38
UCD*	36	6	8	22	28	67	26
Finn Harps (R)	36	4	8	24	33	71	20

**Won the relegation play-off*

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hacken (C)	30	18	10	2	69	37	64
Djurgardens	30	17	6	7	55	25	57
Hammarby	30	16	8	6	60	27	56
Kalmar	30	15	6	9	41	27	51
AIK	30	14	8	8	45	36	50
Elfsborg	30	13	10	7	55	35	49
Malmo	30	13	7	10	44	34	46
IFK Goteborg	30	14	3	13	42	39	45
Mjallby	30	11	10	9	33	33	43
Varnamo	30	9	10	11	34	47	37
Sirius	30	9	8	13	31	42	35
Norrkoping	30	8	10	12	40	42	34
Degerfors	30	7	10	13	32	49	31
Varbergs*	30	8	7	15	31	57	31
Helsingborgs (R)	30	4	5	21	22	52	17
GIF Sundsvall (R)	30	4	2	24	28	80	14

**Won the relegation play-off*

SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras (C)	38	23	12	3	66	27	81
Internacional	38	20	13	5	58	31	73
Fluminense	38	21	7	10	63	41	70
Corinthians	38	18	11	9	44	36	65
Flamengo	38	18	8	12	60	39	62
Athletico Paranaense	38	16	10	12	48	48	58
Atletico Mineiro	38	15	13	10	45	37	58
Fortaleza	38	15	10	13	46	39	55
Sao Paulo	38	13	15	10	55	42	54
America Mineiro	38	15	8	15	40	40	53
Botafogo	38	15	8	15	41	43	53
Santos	38	12	11	15	44	41	47
Goias	38	11	13	14	40	53	46
Red Bull Bragantino	38	11	11	16	49	59	44
Coritiba	38	12	6	20	39	60	42
Cuiaba	38	10	11	17	31	42	41
Ceara (R)	38	7	16	15	34	41	37
Atletico Goianiense (R)	38	8	12	18	39	57	36
Avai (R)	38	9	8	21	34	60	35
Juventude (R)	38	3	13	22	29	69	22

BOLIVIA

Clausura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
The Strongest	24	16	5	3	58	25	53
Always Ready	24	16	3	5	52	22	51
Bolivar	24	15	5	4	52	25	50
Nacional Potosi	24	13	3	8	44	40	42
Oriente Petrolero	24	11	5	8	36	26	38
Guabira	24	11	5	8	35	33	38
Aurora	24	7	8	9	22	35	29
Independiente	24	7	7	10	34	33	28
Atletico Palmaflor	24	5	12	7	31	34	27
Blooming	24	7	6	11	27	35	27
Jorge Wilstermann	24	7	6	11	24	32	27
Real Tomayapo	24	7	5	12	25	35	26
Royal Pari	24	7	4	13	25	35	25
Real Santa Cruz	24	7	4	13	25	47	25
Universitario de Sucre* (R)	24	6	5	13	24	46	23
Universitario de Vinto	24	5	7	12	23	34	22

Season abandoned with six matchdays remaining
**Entered and lost the relegation play-off as the lowest-ranked team in the aggregate table*

CHILE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo-Colo (C)	30	18	9	3	54	17	63
Nublense	30	14	10	6	46	32	52
Curico Unido	30	13	10	7	48	30	49
Palestino	30	12	10	8	45	35	46
Cobresal	30	13	6	11	44	39	45
Universidad Catolica	30	13	6	11	41	38	45
Audax Italiano	30	12	9	9	44	42	45
O'Higgins	30	11	11	8	31	31	44
Everton	30	9	15	6	40	27	42
Union La Calera	30	9	12	9	36	40	39
Union Espanola	30	10	7	13	37	44	37
Huachipato	30	10	5	15	32	46	35
Universidad de Chile	30	8	6	16	35	50	30
Coquimbo Unido	30	7	6	17	32	52	27
Deportes La Serena (R)	30	7	6	17	28	56	27
Deportivo Antofagasta (R)	30	6	8	16	23	37	26

COLOMBIA

Finalizacion

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santa Fe*	20	10	4	6	25	26	34
Aguilas Doradas*	20	8	9	3	23	15	33
Independiente Medellin*	20	9	6	5	30	25	33
Millonarios*	20	9	5	6	29	19	32
Deportivo Pereira*	20	9	5	6	26	21	32
Deportivo Pasto*	20	9	5	6	24	23	32
America de Cali*	20	7	10	3	21	11	31
Junior*	20	9	4	7	24	19	31
Atletico Nacional	20	7	9	4	31	25	30
Once Caldas	20	7	9	4	21	18	30
Atletico Bucaramanga	20	9	3	8	26	25	30
Union Magdalena	20	8	5	7	23	28	29
La Equidad	20	6	10	4	28	27	28
Tolima	20	6	8	6	23	22	26
Envigado	20	7	5	8	22	22	26
Jaguares	20	4	8	8	14	20	20
Alianza Petrolera	20	4	5	11	24	32	17
Deportivo Cali	20	3	7	10	22	35	16
Patriotas** (R)	20	3	6	11	21	28	15
Cortulua** (R)	20	2	5	13	12	28	11

**Qualify for the semi-final stage*
***Relegated as two lowest-ranked teams based on points-per-game average over past three seasons*

Semi-Final Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Deportivo Pereira (Q)	6	4	0	2	13	9	12
Millonarios	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
Santa Fe	6	2	3	1	8	9	9
Junior	6	0	1	5	5	11	1

Semi-Final Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Independiente Medellin (Q)	6	3	2	1	6	3	11
Aguilas Doradas	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Deportivo Pasto	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
America de Cali	6	1	1	4	4	9	4

Final

Dec 4: Ind. Medellin 1-1 Deportivo Pereira
Dec 7: Dep. Pereira p0-0 Ind. Medellin (agg 1-1)

ECUADOR

Second Stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aucas*	15	9	6	0	28	9	33
Independiente del Valle	15	9	2	4	20	16	29
Universidad Catolica	15	8	3	4	22	12	27
LDU Quito	15	7	5	3	23	17	26
Emelec	15	7	4	4	22	15	25
Deportivo Cuenca	15	6	4	5	18	16	22
Tecnico Universitario	15	6	4	5	20	20	22
Barcelona SC	15	5	6	4	24	19	21
Delfin	15	5	4	6	17	19	19
Orense	15	4	6	5	16	17	18
Cumbaya	15	4	6	5	15	16	18
Guayaquil City	15	4	5	6	15	17	17
Gualaceo	15	4	2	9	10	23	14
Mushuc Runa	15	2	6	7	12	22	12
Macara** (R)	15	2	5	8	17	28	11
9 de Octubre** (R)	15	2	4	9	12	25	10

**Qualify for the final against the first stage winners*
***Relegated as the two lowest-ranked teams in the aggregate table*

Final

Nov 6: Barcelona SC 0-1 Aucas
Nov 13: Aucas 0-0 Barcelona SC (agg 1-0)

PARAGUAY

Clausura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia (C)	22	15	4	3	42	19	49
Cerro Porteno	22	14	6	2	32	13	48
Nacional	22	13	6	3	30	16	45
Libertad	22	10	4	8	35	27	34
Tacuary	22	9	4	9	27	25	31
Sportivo Ameliano	22	9	2	11	29	32	29
General Caballero (JLM)	22	8	4	10	26	26	28
Guairena	22	7	6	9	26	31	27
Club Guarani	22	6	5	11	23	32	23
Sol de America* (R)	22	5	6	11	21	33	21
Resistencia	22	5	6	11	16	32	21
12 de Octubre* (R)	22	3	3	16	16	37	12

**Relegated as two lowest-ranked teams based on points-per-game average over past three seasons*

PERU

Clausura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima*	18	13	3	2	31	10	42
Sporting Cristal**	18	12	5	1	39	17	41
Atletico Grau	18	11	4	3	30	19	37
Universitario	18	9	6	3	26	10	33
Melgar***	18	10	3	5	31	18	33
Cesar Vallejo	18	10	3	5	25	24	33
UTC	18	8	4	6	28	24	28
Sport Huancayo	18	8	3	7	26	19	27
Alianza Atletico	18	8	3	7	23	21	27
Binacional	18	8	2	8	28	19	26
Cienciano	18	7	4	7	24	23	25
ADT	18	6	6	6	25	25	24
Sport Boys	18	6	3	9	23	31	21
Deportivo Municipal	18	5	5	8	20	29	20
Academia Cantolao	18	4	7	7	19	22	19
Ayacucho** (R)**	18	3	5	10	16	28	14
Carlos Mannucci	18	3	4	11	13	33	13
Carlos Stein*** (R)**	18	1	3	14	18	43	6
U San Martin*** (R)**	18	1	3	14	17	47	6

**Qualify for play-offs as Clausura winners*
***Qualify for play-offs as highest-ranked team in the aggregate table*
****Qualify for play-offs as Apertura winners*
*****Lost the relegation play-off*
******Relegated as two lowest-ranked teams in the aggregate table*

Play-Off Semi-Final

Nov 2: Melgar 2-0 Sporting Cristal
Nov 6: Sporting Cristal 0-2 Melgar (agg 0-4)

Play-Off Final

Nov 9: Melgar 1-0 Alianza Lima
Nov 12: Alianza Lima 2-0 Melgar (agg 2-1)

URUGUAY

Clausura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional*	15	10	4	1	26	9	34
River Plate	15	9	3	3	29	12	30
Deportivo Maldonado	15	8	6	1	19	11	30
Liverpool	15	8	4	3	23	12	28
Danubio	15	6	7	2	19	10	25
Defensor Sporting	15	7	4	4	18	12	25
Boston River	15	6	4	5	21	15	22
Penarol	15	6	4	5	20	16	22
Cerro Largo	15	5	4	6	11	18	19
Fenix	15	4	5	6	13	15	17
Montevideo Wanderers	15	4	4	7	12	19	16
Albion (R)**	15	4	4	7	11	19	16
Plaza Colonia	15	4	2	9	11	20	14
Montevideo City Torque	15	4	1	10	12	24	13
Rentistas (R)**	15	3	1	11	16	31	10
Cerrito (R)**	15	2	3	10	10	28	9

**Qualify for the final against Apertura winners*
***Relegated as three lowest-ranked teams based on points-per-game average over past two seasons*

Final

Oct 30: Liverpool 1-4 Nacional (AET)

VENEZUELA

First Stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zamora*	30	14	13	3	44	24	55
Metropolitanos*	30	15	8	7	44	29	53
Monagas*	30	13	9	8	46	33	48
Carabobo*	30	11	13	6	36	22	46
Deportivo La Guaira	30	12	10	8	46	42	46
Deportivo Tachira	30	11	11	8	38	33	44
Academia Puerto Cabello	30	11	8	11	38	41	41
Hermanos Colmenarez	30	11	7	12	39	38	40
Estudiantes de Merida	30	9	12	9	38	37	39
Portuguesa	30	7	16	7	26	27	37
Caracas	30	8	12	10	34	36	36
Deportivo Lara	30	9	9	12	32	36	36
Mineros de Guayana	30	8	10	12	43	54	34
Zulia	30	8	8	14	29	43	32
Universidad Central	30	6	9	15	19	40	27
Aragua (R)	30	5	9	16	32	49	24

**Qualify for the final phase*

Final Phase

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Metropolitanos (Q)	6	2	3	1	3	2	9
Monagas (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Carabobo	6	2	1	3	8	8	7
Zamora	6	1	4	1	5	6	7

Final

Oct 30: Metropolitanos p1-1 Monagas (AET)

AFRICA

MALAWI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nyasa Big Bullets (C)	30	22	7	1	69	21	73
Blue Eagles	30	18	9	3	39	10	63
Kamuzu Barracks	30	16	9	5	37	19	57
Mighty Wanderers	30	16	8	6	53	26	56
Silver Strikers	30	14	9	7	38	26	51
MAFCO	30	14	8	8	49	26	50
Moyale Barracks	30	14	4	12	38	32	46
CIVO United	30	10	15	5	35	25	45
Dedza Dynamos	30	11	8	11	29	36	41
Ekwendeni Hammers	30	8	10	12	33	35	34
Karonga United	30	8	8	14	26	42	32
Mighty Tigers	30	8	7	15	23	38	31
Red Lions	30	7	8	15	27	38	29
Sable Farming (R)	30	6	6	18	24	44	24
TN Stars (R)	30	4	5	21	24	68	17
Rumphi United (R)	30	3	1	26	15	73	10

ZIMBABWE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Platinum (C)	34	22	9	3	52	14	75
Chicken Inn	34	18	9	7	42	28	63
Dynamos	34	16	10	8	33	17	58
Ngezi Platinum	34	14	13	7	46	19	55
Highlanders	34	12	15	7	44	32	51
Triangle United	34	13	11	10	39	31	50
Bulawayo Chiefs	34	13	10	11	32	28	49
Herentals	34	12	12	10	33	30	48
Black Rhinos	34	10	16	8	35	30	46
Manica Diamonds	34	10	15	9	31	28	45
CAPS United	34	9	13	12	35	42	40
Kariba	34	9	12	13	23	29	39
Cranborne Bullets	34	10	8	16	30	43	38
Yadah	34	8	13	13	24	31	37
Harare City (R)	34	7	14	13	24	32	35
Bulawayo City (R)	34	9	7	18	24	42	34
Tenax (R)	34	7	9	18	19	55	30
Whawha (R)	34	6	6	22	28	63	24

ASIA

KYRGYZSTAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Abdish-Ata (C)	27	18	6	3	62	16	60
Alay	27	14	9	4	39	21	51
Alga	27	13	6	8	45	39	45
Dordoi Bishkek	27	12	8	7	45	30	44
Neftchi	27	12	7	8	42	28	43
Kaganat	27	9	10	8	31	34	37
Nur-Batken	27	10	5	12	32	39	35
Ilbirs	27	7	8	12	24	29	29
Talant	27	4	9	14	26	41	21
Kara-Balta (R)	27	1	2	24	14	83	5

VIETNAM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hanoi (C)	24	15	6	3	47	21	51
Hai Phong	24	14	6	4	39	26	48
Binh Dinh	24	14	5	5	37	22	47
Viettel	24	11	6	7	29	14	39
Song Lam Nghe An	24	9	6	9	29	28	33
Hoang Anh Gia Lai	24	7	11	6	26	24	32
Binh Duong	24	7	7	10	32	41	28
Thanh Hoa	24	8	4	12	27	27	28
Ho Chi Minh City	24	6	7	11	23	34	25
Da Nang	24	6	7	11	18	35	25
Hong Linh Ha Tinh	24	5	9	10	26	33	24
Nam Dinh	24	6	5	13	21	33	23
Saigon (R)	24	5	7	12	26	42	22

Internationals

FRIENDLIES

Nov 6:
Saudi Arabia 1 (Abdulhamid 26)
Iceland 0

Mexico 4 (Vega 4, Funes Mori 48, Gallardo 67, Antuna 90+2 pen)
Iraq 0

Nov 10:
Costa Rica 2 (Duarte 7, Waston 73)
Nigeria 0

Panama 1 (Diaz 8)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Asiri 37)

Iran 1 (Torabi 15)
Nicaragua 0

Nov 11:
South Korea 1 (Song Min-kyu 33)
Iceland 0

Bahrain 2 (Al Humaidan 14, Yusuf Helal 65 pen)
Canada 2 (Kone 6, Haram 81 og)

Nov 16:
Saudi Arabia 0
Croatia 1 (Kramaric 82)

United Arab Emirates 0
Argentina 5 (Alvarez 17, Di Maria 25, 36, Messi 44, J. Correa 60)

Oman 0
Germany 1 (Fullkrug 80)

Poland 1 (Piatek 85)
Chile 0

Mexico 1 (Vega 60)
Sweden 2 (Rohden 54, Svanberg 84)

Nov 17:
Ghana 2 (Salisu 70, Semenyo 74)
Switzerland 0

Japan 1 (Soma 9)
Canada 2 (Vitoria 21, Cavallini 90+5 pen)

Jordan 1 (Samir 90+2)
Spain 3 (Fati 13, Gavi 56, Williams 84)

Morocco 3 (En-Nesyri 5, Ziyech 29, Boufal 72 pen)
Georgia 0

Portugal 4 (Fernandes 9, 35 pen, Ramos 82, Mario 84)
Nigeria 0

Nov 18:
Cameroon 1 (Choupo-Moting 48)
Panama 1 (Murillo 55)

Belgium 1 (Openda 76)
Egypt 2 (Mohamed 33, Trezeguet 46)

Bahrain 1 (Yusuf Helal 15 pen)
Serbia 5 (Tadic 8, 50, Vlahovic 51, Djuricic 87, Jovic 89)

Nov 9: Cameroon 1-1 Jamaica
Nov 12: Ecuador 0-0 Iraq
Nov 15: Venezuela 2-2 Panama; Dominican Republic 2-4 Cuba
Nov 16: Ivory Coast 4-0 Burundi; Czech Rep 5-0 Faroe Islands; Andorra 0-1 Austria; Turkey 2-1 Scotland; Cyprus 0-2 Bulgaria; Algeria 1-1 Mali; Albania 1-3 Italy; Uzbekistan 2-0 Kazakhstan; Moldova 1-2 Azerbaijan; Kosovo 2-2 Armenia; Gibraltar 2-0 Liechtenstein; Nepal 1-0 Pakistan
Nov 17: Peru 1-0 Paraguay; Tajikistan 0-0 Russia; Romania 1-2 Slovenia; Montenegro 2-2 Slovakia: North Macedonia 1-1 Finland; Malta 2-2 Greece; Israel 4-2 Zambia; South Africa 2-1 Mozambique; Luxembourg 2-2 Hungary; Syria 0-1 Belarus; Rep of Ireland 1-2 Norway; St Lucia 1-1 San Marino; Nicaragua 1-0 El Salvador; Angola 1-0 Botswana; Rwanda 0-0 Sudan; Guinea-Bissau 1-3 Gabon
Nov 18: Dominican Republic 1-1 Cuba
Nov 19: Burkina Faso 2-1 Ivory Coast; Turkey 2-1 Czech Rep; Sweden 2-0 Algeria; UAE 2-1 Kazakhstan; Albania 2-0 Armenia; Kosovo 1-1 Faroe Islands; Gibraltar 1-0 Andorra; Sudan 0-1 Rwanda; Kuwait 2-0 Lebanon
Nov 20: Uzbekistan 0-0 Russia; Colombia 2-0 Paraguay; Peru 1-0 Bolivia; Slovakia 0-0 Chile; South Africa 1-1 Angola; Norway 1-1 Finland; Slovenia 1-0 Montenegro; Luxembourg 0-0 Bulgaria; Syria 1-2 Venezuela; Moldova 0-5 Romania; Malta 0-1 Rep of Ireland; Hungary 2-1 Greece; Austria 2-0 Italy; Guatemala 3-1 Nicaragua; North Macedonia 1-3 Azerbaijan; Oman 2-0 Belarus; Israel 2-3 Cyprus; St Lucia 1-0 San Marino; Guinea-Bissau 0-0 Gambia

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EVERY GOAL
EVERY GAME
EXPERT ANALYSIS
THE COMPLETE RECORD

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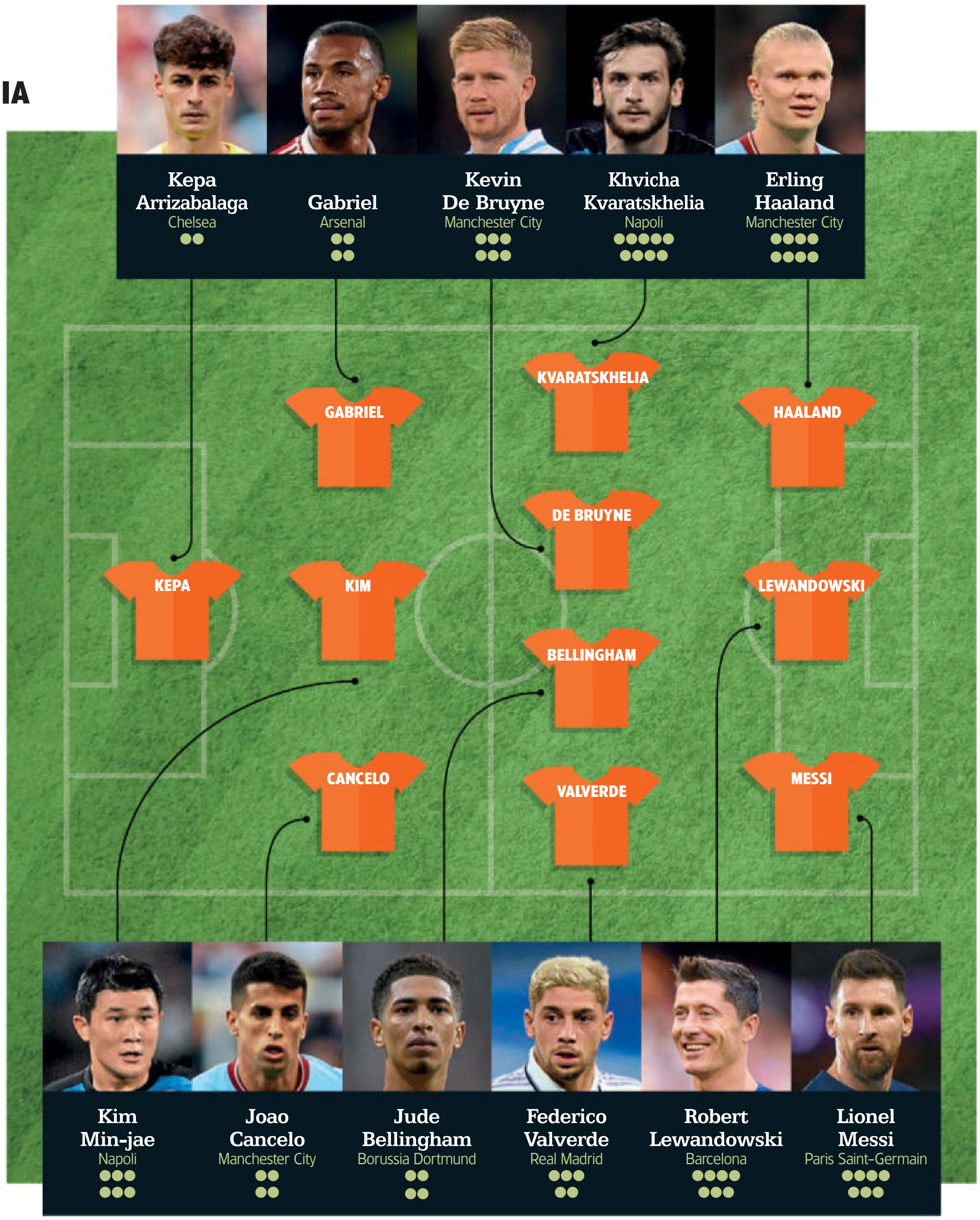

SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Thibaut Courtois (Real Madrid)	12
Gianluigi Donnarumma (PSG)	3
Yann Sommer (B. M'Gladbach)	3
Kepa Arrizabalaga (Chelsea)	2
David de Gea (Manchester United)	2
Marc-Andre ter Stegen (Barcelona)	2
Diogo Costa (Porto)	1
Ederson (Manchester City)	1
Rafal Gikiewicz (Augsburg)	1
Gregor Kobel (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Mike Maignan (Milan)	1
Simon Mignolet (Club Brugge)	1
Juan Musso (Atalanta)	1
Rui Patricio (Roma)	1
Nick Pope (Newcastle United)	1
Geronimo Rulli (Villarreal)	1
Brice Samba (Lens)	1
Kevin Trapp (Eintracht Frankfurt)	1

DEFENDERS

Kim Min-jae (Napoli)	12
Joao Cancelo (Manchester City)	11
David Alaba (Real Madrid)	10
Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid)	7
Ruben Dias (Manchester City)	6
Gabriel (Arsenal)	6
Benjamin Pavard (Bayern Munich)	6
Eder Militao (Real Madrid)	5
Antonio Rudiger (Real Madrid)	4
Mario Rui (Napoli)	4
Diogo Dalot (Manchester United)	3
Alphonso Davies (Bayern Munich)	3
Eric Dier (Tottenham)	3
William Saliba (Arsenal)	3
Pau Torres (Villarreal)	3
Dayot Upamecano (Bayern Munich)	3
Danilo (Juventus)	2
Giovanni Di Lorenzo (Napoli)	2
Alex Grimaldo (Benfica)	2
Theo Hernandez (Milan)	2
Roger Ibanez (Roma)	2
Lisandro Martinez (Manchester Utd)	2
Ferland Mendy (Real Madrid)	2
Nuno Tavares (Marseille)	2
Rafael Toloi (Atalanta)	2
Kieran Trippier (Newcastle United)	2
Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool)	2
Toby Alderweireld (Antwerp)	1
Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool)	1
Ronald Araujo (Barcelona)	1
Rodrigo Becao (Udinese)	1
Ramy Bensebaini (B. M'Gladbach)	1
Leonardo Bonucci (Juventus)	1
Marc Cucurella (Chelsea)	1
Matthijs de Ligt (Bayern Munich)	1
Oscar De Marcos (Athletic Bilbao)	1
Federico Dimarco (Internazionale)	1
Denzel Dumfries (Internazionale)	1
Achraf Hakimi (PSG)	1
Lucas Hernandez (Bayern Munich)	1
Paul Jaeckel (Union Berlin)	1
Reece James (Chelsea)	1
Jules Kounde (Barcelona)	1
Tyrell Malacia (Manchester United)	1
Marquinhos (PSG)	1
Daniel Munoz (Genk)	1
Alfonso Pedraza (Villarreal)	1
Amir Rrahmani (Napoli)	1
Antonio Silva (Benfica)	1
Thiago Silva (Chelsea)	1
Takehiro Tomiyasu (Arsenal)	1
Kyle Walker (Manchester City)	1
Ben White (Arsenal)	1
Oleksandr Zinchenko (Arsenal)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Kevin De Bruyne (Manchester City)	17
Martin Odegaard (Arsenal)	9
Federico Valverde (Real Madrid)	9
Jude Bellingham (Borussia Dortmund)	6
Luka Modric (Real Madrid)	6
Jamal Musiala (Bayern Munich)	5
Pedri (Barcelona)	5
Aurelien Tchouameni (Real Madrid)	5
Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich)	4
Enzo Fernandez (Benfica)	3
Granit Xhaka (Arsenal)	3
Ilkay Gundogan (Manchester City)	2
Toni Kroos (Real Madrid)	2
Marco Verratti (PSG)	2
Benjamin Bourigeaud (Rennes)	1
Hakan Calhanoglu (Internazionale)	1
Casemiro (Manchester United)	1
Brahim Diaz (Milan)	1
Christian Eriksen (Manchester United)	1
Bruno Fernandes (Manchester United)	1
Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg (Tottenham)	1
Teun Koopmeiners (Atalanta)	1
Stanislav Lobotka (Napoli)	1
Sergej Milinkovic-Savic (Lazio)	1
Roberto Pereyra (Udinese)	1
Bernardo Silva (Manchester City)	1
Thiago (Liverpool)	1
Vitinha (PSG)	1
Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (Napoli)	1
Piotr Zielinski (Napoli)	1

FORWARDS

Erling Haaland (Manchester City)	31
Robert Lewandowski (Barcelona)	17
Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (Napoli)	11
Lionel Messi (PSG)	11
Neymar (PSG)	8
Vinicius Jr (Real Madrid)	8
Aleksandar Mitrovic (Fulham)	6
Kylian Mbappe (PSG)	5
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	3
Gabriel Martinelli (Arsenal)	3
Sheraldo Becker (Union Berlin)	2
Ousmane Dembele (Barcelona)	2
Gabriel Jesus (Arsenal)	2
Rafael Leao (Milan)	2
Sadio Mane (Bayern Munich)	2
Rafa Silva (Benfica)	2
Dusan Vlahovic (Juventus)	2
Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting (Bayern)	1
Serge Gnabry (Bayern Munich)	1
Vincent Janssen (Antwerp)	1
Jesper Lindstrom (Eintracht Frankfurt)	1
Christopher Nkunku (RB Leipzig)	1
Victor Osimhen (Napoli)	1
Dango Ouattara (Lorient)	1
Marcus Rashford (Manchester United)	1
Bukayo Saka (Arsenal)	1
Leroy Sane (Bayern Munich)	1
Martin Terrier (Rennes)	1

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